# AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XIV OCTOBER, 1904 No. 3

## CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Cover Design | *C. Allan Gilbert* | |
| The Maid and the Widow. Novelette | *Anne Warner* | 1 |
| Past Use. Poem | *Allan Munier* | 52 |
| The First Meet. Short Story | *Vincent Harper* | 53 |
| The Wrath of Man. Short Story | *M. H. Vorse* | 62 |
| The Social Side of New Orleans | | 69 |
| Editorial | | 76 |
| The Heart of Lady Anne. Part II | *Agnes and Egerton Castle* | 77 |
| The Mocking Bird. Poem | *Richard Burton* | 93 |
| Frost Grapes. Short Story | *Edna Kingsley Wallace* | 94 |
| Protest. Poem | *Ella Wheeler Wilcox* | 97 |
| A Quarter-Hour in Trinity. Short Story | *Robert E. MacAlarney* | 98 |
| To Youth. Poem | *Rosalie Arthur* | 102 |
| The Exception. Short Story | *Owen Oliver* | 103 |
| In Cinderella's Shoes. Short Story | *Mary Stewart Cutting* | 107 |
| In Friendship's Name. Short Story | *Joseph C. Lincoln* | 111 |
| "The Woman with the Book." Short Story | *Richard Inson* | 117 |
| When the King Comes to His Own. Poem | *Arthur Stringer* | 131 |
| The Return of the Rose. Short Story | *Beatrice Hanscom* | 132 |
| The Voyage. Poem | *Theodore Dreiser* | 136 |
| Wives Versus Business. Essay | *Dorothy Dix* | 137 |
| The Eternal Masculine. Short Story | *Katherine M. Roof* | 140 |
| A Bit of Finesse. Short Story | *Elizabeth Duer* | 144 |
| Bernhardt in "La Sorciere" | *Alan Dale* | 150 |
| For Book Lovers | *Archibald Lowery Sessions* | 156 |

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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XIV. OCTOBER, 1904. No. 3.

# THE MAID AND THE WIDOW

By Anne Warner

Author of "A Woman's Will," "Susan Clegg and Her Friend, Mrs. Lathrop," Etc.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCING AUNT MARY.

THE first time that Jack was threatened with expulsion from college his Aunt Mary was much surprised and decidedly vexed—mainly at the college. His family were less surprised, viewing the young man through a clearer atmosphere than his Aunt Mary ever had, and knowing that he had barely escaped similar experiences earlier in his career by invariably leaving school the day before the board of inquiry convened.

Jack's preparatory days having been more or less tempestuous, his family (Aunt Mary excepted) had expected some sort of afterclap when he entered college. Nevertheless, they had fervently hoped that it would not be quite as bad as this.

Bad as it was, the authorities saw fit to be uncommonly discreet as to the cause of his withdrawal, and, owing to their reticence, the young man had no difficulty in entering upon another campus. Arethusa was visiting her aunt when the news came—not because she wanted to, for the old lady was dreadfully deaf and fearfully arbitrary, but because Lucinda had said that she *must* go to her cousin's wedding, and the family always had to bow to Lucinda's mandates. Lucinda was Aunt Mary's maid, but she had become so indispensable as a sitter at the off-end of the latter's ear trumpet that none of the grand-nephews or grand-nieces ever thought for an instant of crossing one of her wishes. So it was to Arethusa that the explanations due Aunt Mary's interest in her scapegrace fell, and she bowed her back to the burden with the resignation which the circumstances demanded.

"Whatever is the difference between bein' expelled and bein' suspended?" Aunt Mary demanded, in her tone of imperious impatience. "Well, why don't you answer? I was brought up to speak when you're spoken to, an' I'm a great believer in livin' up to your bringin' up—if you had a good one. What's the difference, an' which costs most? That's what I want to know. I do wish you'd answer me, Arethusa; there's two things I've asked you now, an' you suckin' your finger an' puttin' on your thimble as if you was sittin' alone in China."

"I don't know which costs most," Arethusa shrieked.

"You needn't scream so," said Aunt Mary. "I ain't so hard to hear as you

think. I ain't but seventy, and I'll beg you to remember *that*, Arethusa. Besides, I don't want to hear you talk. I just want to hear about Jack. I'm askin' about his bein' expelled and suspended, an' what's the difference, an' in particular if there's anything to pay for broken glass. It's always broken glass! That boy's bills for broken glass have been somethin' just awful these last two years. Well, why don't you answer?"

"I don't know what to answer," Arethusa screamed.

"What do you suppose he's done, anyhow?"

"Something bad."

Aunt Mary frowned.

"I ain't mad," she said, sharply. "What made you think I was mad? I ain't mad at all! I'm just askin' what's the difference between bein' expelled an' bein' suspended, an' seems to me this is the third time I've asked it. Seems to me it is."

Arethusa laid down her work, drew a mighty breath, very nearly got into the ear trumpet, and explained that being suspended was infinitely less heinous than being expelled, and decidedly less final.

Aunt Mary looked relieved.

"Oh, then he's gettin' better, is he?" she said. "Well, I'm sure that's some comfort."

And then there was a long pause, during which she appeared to be engaged in deep reflection, and her niece continued her embroidery in peace. The pause endured until a sudden sneeze on the part of the old lady set the wheels of conversation turning again.

"Arethusa," she said, "I wish you'd go an' get the ink an' write to Mr. Stebbins. I want him to begin to look up another college with good references right away. I don't want to waste any of the boy's life, an' if bein' suspended means waitin' while the college takes its time to consider whether it wants him back again or not I ain't goin' to wait. I'm a great believer in a college education, an' I don't know that it cuts much figure whether it's the same college right through or not. Anyway, you write Mr. Stebbins."

Arethusa obeyed, and soon after Lucinda's return allowed her to escape from the thralldom of Aunt Mary's imperious will and impervious ear drums, her hopeful young brother became a candidate for his third outfit of new sweaters and hat bands that year.

Aunt Mary wrote him a letter upon the occasion of his new start in life, Mr. Stebbins delivered him a lecture, and things went smoothly in consequence for three whole weeks.

At the end of that time some evil spirit incited him to attempt, one very dark night, the shooting of a cat on a back fence. He was successful so far as the going off of the gun was concerned, but the damage that resulted, resulted not to the cat, but to the arm of the next-door's cook, who was peacefully engaged in taking in her week's wash on the other side of the fence. The cook ceased abruptly to take in the wash, the affair was at once what is technically termed looked into, and three days later Jack became the defendant in a suit for damages.

Naturally Mr. Stebbins was at once notified, and he immediately sent word to Aunt Mary.

Aunt Mary was somewhat less patient over the third escapade than she had been with the first two.

Arethusa was gone, and the message found her alone with Lucinda. She read it to herself three times, and then she read it aloud to her companion.

"Now, what do you suppose possessed that boy to shoot at a cook?" she asked. "Cooks are so awful hard to get nowadays. I don't see why he didn't shoot a tramp if he had to shoot somethin'."

"He wa'n't tryin' to shoot a cook, 'pears like," cried Lucinda—Lucinda's voice was of that sibilant and penetrating timbre which is best illustrated in the accents of a steam fitter's file—"'pears like he was tryin' for a bat."

"Not a *bat*," said her mistress, correctively; "it was a cat. You look at the letter an' you'll see. And, anyway, how could a man shootin' at a bat hit a cook?—not 'nless she was up a tree birds'-nestin' after owls' eggs. You don't seem to pay much attention to

what you read, Lucinda; but I should think your common sense would help you out some when it comes to a boy you've known from the time he could walk, an' a strange cook. But, anyhow, that's neither here nor there. The question is, what's to pay with this damage suit? I think myself five hundred dollars is too much for any cook's left arm. A cook ain't in no such vital need of two arms. If she has to shut the door of the oven while she's stirrin' somethin' on top of the stove, she can easy kick it to with her foot. It won't be for long, anyway, and I'm a great believer in making the best of things when you've got to."

Lucinda screwed up her face and made no comment. Lucinda's face in repose was a cross between a monkey and a peanut; screwed up, it was particularly awful, and always exasperated her mistress.

"Well, why don't you say somethin', Lucinda? I ain't askin' your advice, but, all the same, you can say anything if you've got a mind to."

"I ain't got a mind to say anythin'," the faithful maid rejoined.

"I guess you hit the nail on the head that time," said Aunt Mary, without any unnecessary malevolence concealed behind her sarcasm; and then she re-read the note and frowned afresh.

"Five hundred dollars is too much," she said again. "I'm goin' to write to Mr. Stebbins an' tell him so to-night. He can compromise on two hundred and fifty, just as well as not. Get me some paper and my desk, Lucinda. Now, get a spryness about you."

Lucinda got a spryness about her, and brought her mistress' writing desk with commendable alacrity. Aunt Mary wrote fiercely for some time, and finally wrote most of the fierceness out of herself.

"After all, boys will be boys," she said, "and if this is the end I shan't feel it's money wasted. I'm a great believer in bein' patient. Most always, that is. Here, Lucinda you take this letter to Joshua and tell him to take it right to post. Be prompt, now. I'm a great believer in doin' things prompt."

Lucinda went promptly; she always went promptly, and that was why she had been Aunt Mary's favorite slave for over twenty years.

Lucinda had been, comparatively speaking, young when she had come to wait upon the pleasure of the Watkins millions, and her waiting had been so pertinent and so patient that it had endured over a quarter of a century. Aunt Mary had been under fifty in the hour of Lucinda's dawn; she was over seventy now. Jack hadn't been born then; he was in college now; and Jack's older brothers and sisters and his dead-and-gone father and mother had been living somewhere out West then, quite hopeful as to their own lives and quite hopeless as to the stern old great-aunt who never had paid any attention to her niece since she had chosen to elope with the doctor's reprobate son. Now the father and mother were dead and buried, the brothers and sisters were reinstated in their rights and had all grown up and become great credits to the old lady, whose heart had suddenly melted at the arrival of five orphans at once. And there was only Jack to continue to worry about.

Jack was not anything particularly remarkable; he was just one of those lovable good-for-nothings that seem born to get better people into trouble all their lives long. He had been spoiled originally by being ten years younger than the next youngest in the family; and then, when the children had been shipped on to Aunt Mary's tender mercies, Jack had won her heart immediately because she accidentally discovered that he had never been baptized, and so felt fully justified in re-naming him after her own father and having the name branded into him for keeps by her own religious apparatus. It followed naturally that John Watkins, Jr., Denham (for so her father's daughter had insisted that her youngest nephew should be called) was the favorite nephew of his aunt.

And it was lucky for him that he *was* the favorite, for Aunt Mary, who was highly spiced at fifty, became peppery at sixty, and almost biting at seventy. And yet for Jack she would sign

checks almost without a murmur. Mr. Stebbins was much more censorious and impatient with the young man than she ever was; and to all the rest of the world Mr. Stebbins was an urbane and agreeable gentleman, whereas to all the rest of the world Aunt Mary was a problem or a terror. But Mr. Stebbins needed to be a man of tact and management, for he was the real manager of that fortune of which "Mary, only surviving child of John Watkins, merchant and ship owner," was the legal possessor; and so tactful was Mr. Stebbins that he and his powerful client had never yet clashed, and they had been in close business relations for almost as many years as Lucinda had been established on the hearthstone of the Watkins home. Perhaps one reason why Mr. Stebbins endured so well was that he had a real talent for compromising, and that he had skillfully transformed Aunt Mary's inherited taste for driving a bargain into an acquired pleasure in what is really a polite form of the same action.

So, when it came to the matter of Jack's difficulties, Mr. Stebbins could always find a halfway measure that saved the situation; and when he received the letter as to the cook and her claim he hied himself to the city at once, and wrote back that the claim could be settled for three hundred dollars.

"And enough, I must say," Aunt Mary remarked to Lucinda the morning after; "three hundred dollars for one cat—for, after all, Jack blames the whole on the cat, an' he didn't hit it, even then."

Lucinda did not answer.

"But if the boy settles down now I shan't mind payin' the three—— Where are you goin'?"

For Lucinda was walking out of the room.

"I'm goin' to the door," she said, raspingly. "The bell's ringin'."

After a minute or two she came back.

"Telegram!" she announced, handing the yellow envelope over.

Aunt Mary put on her glasses, opened it, and read:

Cook has blood poison. Sues for a thousand. Probable amputation. STEBBINS.

Aunt Mary dropped the paper with a gasp.

Lucinda looked at her with interest.

"It's that same arm again," said Aunt Mary, "just as I thought it was settled for!" Her eyes seemed to fairly crackle with indignation. "Why don't she put it in a sling an' have a little patience?"

Lucinda took the telegram and read it.

"'Pears like she can't," she commented, in a tone like a buzz saw; "'pears like it's goin' to be took off."

Aunt Mary shook her head in a way that, if her companion had been a globe-trotter, would have brought matadores and Seville to the front in her mind in that instant.

"I declare," she said, "seems like I had enough on my mind without a cook, too. What's to be done now? I only know one thing! I ain't goin 'to pay no thousand dollars this week for no arm that wasn't worth but three hundred last week. Stands to reason that there ain't no reason in that. I guess you'd better bring me my desk, Lucinda; I'm goin' to write to Mr. Stebbins, an' I'm goin' to write to Jack, and I'm goin' to tell 'em both just what I think. I'm goin' to write Jack that he'd better be lookin' out, and I'm goin to write Mr. Stebbins that next time he settles things I want him to take a receipt for that arm in full."

Mr. Stebbins, upon the receipt of this letter, redoubled his efforts, and did succeed in permanently settling the cook for seven hundred and fifty dollars.

After which the family enjoyed peace until after Easter; but the Easter vacation took Jack to town for a "little time," and the "little time" ended in the station house at three o'clock on Sunday morning.

Accusation: producing concussion of the brain on a cab driver.

## CHAPTER II.

### JACK.

The news was conveyed to Aunt Mary through private advices from Mr. Stebbins (who had been hastily summoned to town for purposes of bail); she was

very angry, indeed—primarily at the indignity done her flesh and blood by arresting it. Then, as she re-read the lawyer's letter, other reflections crowded to the fore in her mind.

"Funny! Whatever could have made the boy get up and go downtown at three in the morning, anyway," she said. "Seems kind of queer, don't you think, Arethusa? Do you suppose he was ill and huntin' for a drug store?"

Arethusa had been sent for the second day previous because Lucinda's youngest sister's youngest child had come down with scarlet fever, and the family wanted Lucinda to enliven the quarantine. Arethusa had had invitations out for a dinner party, but she had recalled them and hastened to obey the summons. It was an evil hour for her, for she loved her brother and was mightily distressed at the bad news.

"I don't believe he can have been ill," she said, at the top of her voice; "if he'd been ill he wouldn't have had the strength to hit the cab driver so hard."

"I don't blame him for hittin' the cab driver," said Aunt Mary, warmly. "As near as I can recollect, I've often wanted to do that myself. But I can't make out where he got the man to hit, or why he was there to hit him. I can't make rhyme or reason out of it. I wish we knew more. Well, I presume we will, later."

Her surmise was correct. They knew much more later. They knew more from Mr. Stebbins, and they knew profusely more from the evening papers.

"I think our boy'd better have come home for his Easter," Aunt Mary remarked, with a species of angry undertow threading the current of her speech. "There's no saying what this will cost before we're done with it."

Arethusa choked; it was all so very terrible to her.

"What is it that the cabman wants, anyhow?" her aunt demanded, presently.

"He doesn't want anything," yelled the unhappy sister. "He's going to die."

"Well, who is going to sue me, then?"

"It's his wife; she wants five thousand dollars damages."

Aunt Mary's lips tightened.

"Five thousand dollars!" she said, with a bitter patience. "I can see that this is goin' to be an awful bad business. Five thousand dollars! Dear, dear! I must say that that wife sets a pretty high price on her husband—at least, a'cordin' to my order of thinkin', she does. From what I've seen of cabmen, I'd undertake to get her another just as good for a tenth of the money, any day."

Arethusa was silent, staring thoughtfully at the newspaper cuts of Corbett and Dick Croker, which had been labeled as the principals in the family tragedy.

Aunt Mary turned over another of the many papers received, and scanned its sensational columns afresh.

"Arethusa," she exclaimed, suddenly, "do you know what, I bet anything, this editor means to insinuate? It just strikes me that he's trying to give the impression that our boy'd been drinkin'."

"Perhaps so," Arethusa screamed.

"Well, I don't believe it," said Aunt Mary, firmly, "and I ain't goin' to believe it. And I ain't goin' to pay no five thousand dollars for no cabman's brains, neither. You write to Mr. Stebbins to compromise on two or maybe three."

She stopped and bit her lips and shook her head. "I don't see why Jack grows up so hard," she murmured, half in anger and half in sorrow. "Edward and Henry never had such times. Oh, well," she sighed, "boys will be boys, I suppose; an' if this all results in the boy's settlin' down it'll be money well spent in the end, after all. Maybe—probably—most likely."

The days that followed were anxious days, but at last the cabman rallied and concluded not to die, and Jack went off yachting with a light heart and a choice collection of good advice from Mr. Stebbins and Aunt Mary.

Nothing happened to mar his holiday. He ran a borrowed steam launch on to some rocks with rather heavy consequences to his aunt's exchequer, and returned from the West Indies so late that she never had a visit from him at all that summer; but, barring these slightly unwelcome incidents, he did remarkably well, and when he returned to college in the fall he was regarded as

having become, at last, a stable proposition.

"I wonder whether our boy's comin' home for Christmas?" Aunt Mary asked her niece, Mary, as that happy period of family reunions drew near. Mary had come up to stay with her aunt while Lucinda went away to bury a second cousin. Mary was very different from Arethusa, having a voice that, when raised, was something between an icicle and a steam whistle, and a temperament so much on the order of her aunt's that neither could abide the other an hour longer than was absolutely necessary. But Arethusa had a sprained ankle, so there was no help for existing circumstances.

"No, he isn't," said Mary, who had no patience at all with her brother, and showed it. "He's going West with the glee club."

"With the she club!" cried poor Aunt Mary, in affright.

Mary explained.

"I don't like the idea," said the old lady, shaking her head. "Something will be sure to happen. I can feel it runnin' up and down my bones this minnit."

"Oh, if he can get into trouble, of course, Jack will," said Mary, cheerfully.

Aunt Mary didn't hear her, because she didn't raise her voice particularly. Besides, the old lady was absorbed for the nonce in the dismalest sort of prognostications.

And they all came true, too. Something unfortunate beyond all expectations came to pass during the glee club's visit to Chicago, and the result was that, before the new year was well out of its incubator Jack had papers in a breach-of-promise suit served on him. He wrote Mr. Stebbins that it was all a joke, and had merely been a portion of that foam which a train of youthful spirts are apt to leave in their wake; but the girl stood solid for her rights, and, as she had never heard from her fiancé since the night of the dance, her family—who were rural, but sharp—thought it would take at least fifteen thousand dollars to patch the crack in her heart. If the news could have been kept from Aunt Mary until after Mr. Stebbins had looked into the matter, everything might have resulted differently. But the Chicago lawyer who had the case took good care that the wealthy aunt knew all as quickly as possible, and it seemed as if this was the final straw under which the camel must succumb.

And Aunt Mary did appear to waver.

"Fifteen thousand dollars!" she cried, aghast. "Heaven help us! What next?"

It was Lucinda who was seated calmly opposite.

"*Do* you suppose he really did it?" the aunt continued, after a minute of appalled consideration.

"It's about the only thing he ain't never done," the tried and true servant answered, her tone more gratingly penetrative than ever.

Aunt Mary eyed her sharply, not to say furiously.

"I wish you'd give a plain answer when I ask you a plain question, Lucinda," she said, coldly. "If you'd ever got a breach-of-promise suit in the early mail you'd know how I feel. Perhaps—probably."

"I ain't a doubt but what he done it," Lucinda screamed out; "an' if I was her an' he wouldn't marry me after sayin' he would I'd sue him for a hundred thousand, and think I let him off cheap then."

Aunt Mary deigned to smile faintly over the subtlety of this speech; but the next minute she was frowning blacker than ever.

"A girl from Kalamazoo, too, just up in Chicago for a week—just up in Chicago long enough to come down on me for fifteen thousand dollars."

"Maybe she'll take five thousand instead," Lucinda remarked.

"Maybe!" ejaculated her mistress, in fine scorn. "*Maybe!* Well, if you don't talk as if money was sweet peas an' would dry up if it wasn't picked!"

Lucinda screwed up her face.

Aunt Mary gave her one awful look.

"You get me some paper an' my desk, Lucinda," she said. "I think it's about time I was takin' a hand in it myself. I've been pretty patient, an' I don't see as it's helped matters any. Now I'm goin' to

write that boy a letter that'll settle him an' his cats, an' his cooks, an' his cabmen, an' his Kalamazoo, just once for all. I guess I can do it. I generally can do what I set out to do. Most always."

Lucinda brought the desk, and Aunt Mary frowned fearfully and began to write the letter.

It developed very strongly. As her pen sized up the situation in black and white, the old lady seemed to realize the iniquities of the situation more and more plainly; and as the letter grew her wrath grew also. The whole came, in the end, to a threat—made in good earnest—to take a very serious step indeed if any more "foolishness" developed.

Aunt Mary prided herself on her granite-like will. She had full faith in her ability to slay her first born if it seemed right and best to do so. She sealed her letter tight, stuck the stamp on square and hard, and bid Lucinda convey it to Joshua and tell him never to quit it until he saw it safe on to the evening train.

"She's awful mad at him," said Lucinda, after she had delivered her message, and while Joshua was considering the front and back of the letter with a deliberateness born of long servitude.

"I sh'd think she would be," he said.

As nearly all of Jack's private difficulties were printed in every newspaper in America, Joshua naturally was on the inside of all their history.

"She scrinched up her face just awful over that letter," Lucinda continued. "I'm sure I wish he'd 'a' been by to 'a' taken warnin'."

"He ain't got nothin' to fret over," said Joshua, serenely. "He knows it, 'n' I know it, 'n' you know it, too."

"You don't know nothin' of the sort," said Lucinda. "She's madder'n usual this time. She's good an' mad. You mark my words, if he goes off on a 'nother spree this spring he'll get cut out o' her will."

Joshua laughed.

"You mark my words!" rasped Lucinda, shaking her finger in witch-like warning.

Joshua laughed again.

"Them laughs best what laughs last," said Aunt Mary's handmaiden. She turned away, and then returned to give Joshua a look that proved that the peppery mistress had inculcated some cayenne into the souls of those about her. "You mark my words—them laughs best what laughs last, an' there'll be little grinnin' for him if he ain't a chalk-walker for one while now."

Joshua laughed.

But, as a matter of fact, Jack's situation was suddenly become extremely precarious.

"There ain't no sense in it," said Aunt Mary to herself, with an emphasis that screwed her face up until she looked quite like Lucinda herself; "that life those young men lead on their little vacations is to blame for everything. Cities are wells of iniquity, and I'm proud to say that I haven't been in one for twenty-five years. I'm a great believer in keepin' out of trouble, an' if Jack'd just stuck to college an' let towns go, he'd never have met the cabman and the Kalamazoo girl, an' I'd have overlooked the cook an' the cat. As it is, my patience is done. If he goes into one more scrape he'll be done, too. I mean what I say. So my young man had better take warnin'. Probably—most likely—pretty certainly."

## CHAPTER III.

### INTRODUCING JACK.

It has been previously stated that Aunt Mary's nephew, Jack, was a scapegrace, and as delightful as scapegraces generally are. It goes without saying that he was good-looking; and of course he must have been jolly and pleasant or he wouldn't have been so popular. As a matter of fact, Jack was very good-looking, unusually jolly, and uncommonly pleasant. He was one of the best-liked men in each of the colleges which he had attended. There was something so winning about his smile and his eternal good humor that no one ever tried to dislike him; and if anyone ever had tried he or she would not have been successful for very long.

Like all college boys, Jack had a

chum. The chum was Robert Burnett, a very charming young fellow of one-and-twenty, whose education had been so cosmopolitan in design and so patriotic in practice that he always said "Sacré bleu" and "Donnerwetter" when he thought of it, and "Gee" when he didn't. He and Jack were as congenial a pair as ever existed, and they had just about as much in common as the aunt of the one and the father of the other had had to pay for.

In the February of the year of which I write, Washington celebrating his birthday as usual, gave all American students their usual chance to celebrate with him. Celebrations were temptations incarnate to Jack, and he was feeling frowningly what a clog Aunt Mary's latest epistle was upon his joys, when his friend came to the rescue with an invitation to spend the double holiday (it doubled that year—Sunday, you know) at the brand-new ancestral castle which Burnett *père* had just finished building for his descendants. It may be imagined that Jack accepted the invitation with alacrity, and that his never-downcast heart bounded gleefully higher than usual over the prospect of two days of pleasure in the country.

It is not necessary to state where the castle of the Burnetts was erected, but it was in a beautiful region, and the monthly magazines had written it up and called it an architectural triumph. The owner fully agreed with the monthly magazines, and his pride found vent in a house-warming which filled every guest chamber in the place.

The festivities were in full swing before the youngest son of the house and his friend got there; and when the dog-cart, which had brought them from the station, drew up under the mighty *porte-cochère* with its four stone lions ramping in four different directions, Jack felt one of those delicious thrills which run through one under particularly hopeful and buoyant circumstances.

"It's like walking in a novel," his friend said; and then they entered under some heavy draperies which the footman pushed aside and found a tiny spiral staircase, which wound its way aloft in a style that Jack liked immensely.

Emerging therefrom on the third floor, they found themselves in a big semi-circular billiard room, with a fireplace at either end large enough to put one of the tables in.

"Ain't it jolly?" said Burnett; and then he exclaimed suddenly: "By George! I wonder if my sister's got down yet."

"Which sister?" Jack inquired; for his friend was one of a very large family, and he had met several of them on their various visits to town.

"Betty—the one you've never seen," replied Burnett; and just then they were halted abruptly by the servant's opening a door, stepping just beyond and opening another door, and thus revealing to their gaze two model men's rooms, exquisitely furnished, and with windows that looked out, first on to a stone balustrade, and secondly on to a superb view over the river and the mountains beyond.

The luggage was brought up a minute later, and the men unstrapped the things and went away. They left a plenitude of comfort behind them such as led Jack to fling himself into the arms of the most luxurious chair in the room and stretch his arms and legs far and wide in utter joy and contentment.

Burnett was fishing for his key ring.

"It's a great old place, isn't it?" he remarked, parenthetically. "Gee! but I'll bet we'll have fun these two days! And if my sister Betty *is* here——" He paused expressively.

"Doesn't she live at home?" Jack asked.

"She's just come home; she's been in England for three years. Oh, but I tell you, she's a corker!"

"I should think——"

The sentence was never completed because a voice without the not-altogether-closed door cried:

"No, don't think, please; let me come in instead." And in the same instant Burnett made one leap and flung the door open, crying as he did so:

"That's her!"

Then Jack, bunching somewhat his

starfish attitude, looked across the room and realized instantly that it was all up with him forever after.

Because——

Because she who stood there in the door was quite the sweetest, the loveliest, the most interesting-looking girl whom he had ever laid eyes on; and when she was seized in her brother's arms and kissed by her brother's lips, and dragged by her brother's hands well into the room, she proved to be a thousand times more irresistible than at first.

"I say, Betty, you're absolutely prettier than ever," her brother exclaimed, holding her a little off from him and surveying her critically; and then he seemed to remember his friend's existence, and, turning toward him, announced proudly:

"My sister, Bertha."

Jack was standing up, thinking how lovely her eyes were just at that instant when they were meeting his for the first time; thinking that Monday was only two days away (hang it!); thinking that such a smile was never known before; thinking that he had *years* ahead at college; thinking that the curl on her forehead was simply distracting (whereas all other like curls were horrid); thinking that he *might* cut college and——

"My chum, Jack Denham," Burnett continued, completing the introductory formalities.

"Oh, I'm very glad to meet you, Mr. Denham," she said, putting out her hand—and he took and held it just long enough to realize that he really *was* holding it, before she took it away to keep for her own again.

"I'm awfully glad to hear you say that," he said, "and if I should have the royal luck to be next to you at dinner nothing on earth could prevent my telling you why."

She clapped her hands just as a very little girl might have done.

"If that's the case, I hope that they will put you next to me at dinner," she said, gayly; "but if they don't, you'll tell me some other time, won't you?"

Burnett began to laugh.

"Jack," he said, "we'd better have a clear and above-board understanding right in the beginning. This sister of mine, who appears so guileless, is the very worst flirt ever. She looks honest, and she can't tell the truth to save her neck. She means well, and she drives folks to suicide just for fun. She'd do anything for anybody in general, and when it's a case of you individually she won't do a thing to you, and you must heed my words and be forewarned and forearmed from now on. Mustn't he, Betty?"

The sister nodded, laughing herself.

"It's awful to have to subscribe to," she said, with dancing eyes; "but I'm afraid it's true. I'm really quite a reprobate, and I admit it frankly. But everyone is so good to me that I never get a chance to reform. And so—and so——"

"I suppose I ought to warn her about you, too," said Burnett, turning suddenly toward his friend. "Why, Betty, he's almost as bad as you are yourself. He hasn't got his breach-of-promise suit all compromised yet. Ask him to deny it, if he can!"

The sister looked startled and curious for an instant, and Jack felt himself blushing.

"I don't look as if you were lying, do I?" he asked, desperately.

"No, you don't," she said. "You look as if it was a very true bill."

"It is," he said; "and an awfully big one, too."

"I wouldn't have thought you were such a bad man," said the sister; "but I like bad men. They interest me. They——"

"I see your finish," said Burnett. "That's one of her favorite opening plays. It's all up with you, Jack, and your aunt will have to go down for another damage suit when you begin to perceive that you have had enough of our family. But you'll have to spare him now to get dressed for dinner, Betty. Don't cry about it; he's even more attractive in his glad rags—my word of honor on it."

"I look nice myself when I'm dinner dressed," said the sister, "so I sympathize with him. So, good-by"

She sort of backed toward the door; Jack sprang to open it for her.

"You can kiss her hand, if you like," Burnett said, kindly. "They do in Germany, you know. I don't mind, and mamma needn't know."

"Can I?" Jack asked her; and then he caught her eye over her brother's bent head and added, so quickly that there was hardly any break at all between the words: "Some other time?"

"Some other time," she said, with a wonder of meaning in the promise, and was gone.

"Isn't she great?" Burnett asked. "Oh, I tell you, I'm always dotty over that sister myself."

"Do you suppose that I could manage to have her for dinner?" Jack asked, feeling desperately how dull any other place at the table would be now.

"I don't know. When I go down to my mother I'll try to manage it; shall I?"

"I wish you could."

"I reckon I can; but, great loads of fire, fellow! don't think that you can play tag with her, and feel funny at the finish. She'll do you up completely and never turn a hair herself. She's always at it. She don't mean to be cruel, but she's naturally a carniverous animal. It's her little way."

Jack did not look as dismal as he should have done; he looked out of the window instead.

"She'll have to marry some one some day, you know," he said, thoughtfully.

"Have to marry some one some day!" Burnett cried. "Why, she *is* married! Didn't you know that?"

It was an awful moment, but the poor fellow did manage to continue looking out of the window. If any greater demand had been made upon him he might have sunk beneath the double weight.

"No," he said at last, his voice painfully steady; "I didn't know it."

Burnett laughed heartlessly.

"She married an Englishman when she was nineteen years old," he said. "That was when they sent me to Eton that little while, until I drove the horse through the drug shop—the time I told you about, don't you know?"

"Yes, I remember," said Jack. He suddenly noticed that the night had begun to fall, that the river's silver ribbon had become a black snake, and that the mountain range beyond loomed chill and dark and cheerless. "I guess I ought to be getting into my things," he added, moving toward his own door.

"There's a bath in here," his friend called after him. "We're to divide it even."

"Sure," was the reply. It sounded a trifle thick.

"I don't think that she ought to," said the brother to himself. "I don't care if she is my favorite sister—I do *not* think that she ought to."

Then he went in to secure his half of the bath, and forthwith forgot his sister and his friend.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MARRIED!

It was almost like a scene at a ball, the great white-and-gold music room before dinner that night. The Burnett family proper numbered fifteen among themselves, and there were nearly thirty guests added. It was too big a house party to have handled successfully for very long, but it was most awfully jolly for three or four days; and now, when the whole crowd were gathered waiting for dinner, the picture was one of such bubbling joy that Jack's very heavy heart seemed to himself to be terribly out of place there.

There were so many people that he had to meet that he only had time to realize that *she* wasn't present before a fearful jump in his throat told him that that radiant angel in silver tissue, just entering at the farther end of the room, was Herself.

(Married!)

Her throat and her arms were half bared by the folds of silvered lace, her hair fitted into the back of her neck in the smoothest mass of puffs and coils, and the curl on her forehead was more distracting than ever.

(Married!)

She seemed to be speaking to every-

one, and everyone seemed to be crowding around her. He couldn't go up like everyone else, because they had introduced him to a bony and awful young lady, who had a smile that took up two-fifths of her face completely, and wrinkled all the rest. Her name was Lorne—Maude Lorne. He knew that she must be a relative, without being told, because otherwise she wouldn't have been invited at all. Anyone could divine *that*.

"Oh, isn't dear Betty just lovely?" this fearful freak said. "I think she's just too lovely for anything! She's my cousin, you know; we're often mistaken for one another."

"I can well believe it," said Jack, heavily.

(Married!)

"Oh, you're flattering me! Because she's ever so much prettier than I am, and I know it."

Jack didn't reply. He was wondering if there ever had been an authentic case of heart-break. Because he had the most terrible ache right in his left side.

(Married! Married!)

"But, then, I'm younger than she is. Her being married makes her seem young, but she's really twenty-four. I'm only twenty."

Jack shut his eyes, and then opened them. He wished he hadn't come here, and then he grew shivery to think that he might have happened not to; and all the while that awful twisting and wrenching at his heart was getting worse and worse.

(Married! Married! Married!)

Burnett came up with a man with a monocle and presented him to Denham, and handed the bony cousin to his safe-keeping.

"She's a great pill, isn't she?" he began; and then he stopped short. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Sick?"

"I hope not," said Jack, trying to smile.

"You look hipped," he said, anxiously. "You'd better go and get a bracer; you'll have time if you hurry. You can't be sick before dinner, because I've been moving all the cards around so as to get Betty next to you, and I could never get them back as they were before if you gave out at the last minute."

"I don't believe I'm ill," said Jack, trying to realize whether the news that she was to be his (for dinner) made him feel better or just about the same. "I don't know what ails me. Do I look seedy?"

"You look sort of knocked out, that's all," said Burnett. "Perhaps, though, it's just the having to talk to my Cousin Maude. Isn't she the limit? But she's a big catch, all the same. She was my uncle's oldest child; she's worth twelve times what any of us ever will be."

"She'll need be," said Jack.

"You're right there," laughed his friend; "but you've got to get your brandy now if you want it, because they'll be going out in a minute."

"Oh, I'm all right," said the poor chap, standing up. "I can make out all straight, I'm sure. I think I'd better go over by your sister and let her know that I'm ready when the hour of need shall strike."

Then he walked down the room, and no one but himself knew that he was making his way into the lion's (or, rather, lioness') den.

She looked up when he paused beside her, and smiled sweetly.

"I expect you are to take me out," she said; and at that the man who had been talking to her murmured something meaningless and got out of their way. Nevertheless——

(Married!)

"I believe so," he said.

She stood up, and he noticed that the top of her head was just level with his coat lapel. He wondered where she came to on her husband's coat.

"Dinner's very late," she said; "you see, it's the first big company in the house. We were only seventeen last night, and to-night we're forty-five. It makes a difference."

"I can imagine so," he said. He felt very awkward somehow. And she seemed different, too—not a bit like up in her brother's room.

"What is it?" she asked, after a minute; and then she showed that she also was conscious of a change, for she

added: "Something has happened; Bob has been saying mean things about me to you."

"Yes, he did tell me something," he admitted; and just then the butler announced dinner.

"What did he tell you?" she asked, as they moved away. "How could he say anything worse than what he said before me?"

"It was worse, though—much worse."

"But he said I was a flirt, and that I couldn't speak the truth, and that I drove people——"

"Yes, I remember all that; but this was infinitely worse."

"Infinitely worse!"

"Yes."

She looked up in his face.

"I can't at all understand," she said.

"No, you can't," he said, "and I can't tell you—I mustn't tell you—how terrible it is to me to look at you and think of what he told me."

They were entering the dining room, and the confusion of placing everyone made them almost alone for a minute. Her hand was in his arm; she drew it out, looking up at him as she did so. Her eyes had a premonitory mist over them.

"For Heaven's sake," she said, very earnestly, "tell me what he said?"

He was silent.

"Tell me," she pleaded.

He was still silent.

"Tell me," she said, imperiously.

He continued silent.

"Mr. Denham," she said, and her voice grew very low, and yet he heard, "I don't think that we can pretend to be joking any longer. You are my brother's friend, and I am a married woman. Please treat me as you should."

"That's just it," said Jack; "that's all there is to it. It wouldn't have amounted to anything except for that—or, perhaps, if it hadn't been for that, it might" (he was putting her into her chair now) "it might have amounted to a great deal."

"If it hadn't been for what?"

"For your being married."

"What do you mean?"

"You see, I never knew it before."

"You never knew what before?"

"That you were married."

"Until when?"

"Until after you went out of the room to-night."

The men were putting the clams around.

"Bob is very wrong to talk so," she said, taking up her fork, "when you're his friend, too."

He poked his clams—he hated clams.

"I suppose men think it's amusing to do such things," she continued, "but I think it's as ill-bred as practical joking."

"But you *are* married," he said, trying fiercely to pepper some taste into the tasteless things before him.

"Yes, I'm married," she admitted, tranquilly, "but, then, my husband went to Africa so soon afterwards that he hardly seemed to count at all. And then he was killed there; so, after that, it seemed to count less than ever."

The man on the other side spoke to her just then, and she turned toward him, and gave Jack time to rally his wits.

(A widow!)

Then she turned back and said:

"I think Bob mystified you unnecessarily. Of course, I don't flatter myself that you've suffered."

"Oh, but I have," he hastened to assure her.

"But it always makes a difference whether a woman is married or not."

"I should say it did," he interrupted again. "It makes all the difference in the world."

Then she laughed outright, and some one suddenly abstracted the distasteful clams and substituted for them a golden and glorious soup, and music sounded forth from some invisible quartet, and—and——

(A widow! A widow! A widow!)

## CHAPTER V.

### THE DAY AFTER FALLING IN LOVE.

The next day was a very memorable day for Jack. The day after *a* falling in love is always a red-letter day; but the day after *the* falling in love—ah!

One looks back—far back—to the day before, and those hours of the day before, when *her* sun had not yet dawned, and struggles to recollect what ends life could have represented *then*. And one looks forward to the next day, the next week, the next year—but, particularly, to the next meeting with sensations as indescribable as they are delightful.

Whichever way you tip it, the kaleidoscope of the future arranges itself in equally attractive shapes of rainbow hue, and the prospect over land or sea—even if it is raining—looks brilliant green, and brighter red, and brightest yellow.

Upon that glorious "next day" of Jack's the weather was quite a thing apart for February—partaking of the warmth of May, and owing that fact to a sun which early June need not have scorned to own. Under the circumstances, the house party overflowed the house and ravaged the surrounding country, and Jack and Mrs. Rosscott began it all by having the highest cart and the fastest cob in the stables and making for the forest just as the clock was tolling ten.

"Do you want a groom?" asked Burnett (who was occasionally very cruel).

"Well, I'm not going to wait for him to get ready now," replied his sister (who had sharp wits and did not disdain to give even her own family the benefit of them).

Then she gathered up the reins and whip in a most scientific manner, and they were off.

Jack folded his arms. Oh, but he was happy! He didn't care where they went or what they did, so long as he had her all alone to himself, and might revel in the bliss thereof.

They bowled away upon a firm, hard road that skirted the park, and then plunged deeply into the forest. Mrs. Rosscott handled the reins and the whip with the hands of an expert.

"I like to drive," said she.

"You appear to," he answered.

"I like to do everything," she said. "I'm very athletic and energetic."

"I'm glad of that," he told her, warmly. "I like athletic girls."

He really thought that he was speaking the truth, although upon that first day if she had declared herself lazy and languid he would have found her equally to his taste. (Because it was the first day.)

"I'm very independent," she declared, further.

"I like that, too," he assured her.

"Oh, I didn't do at all in England," she confessed. "I never dared let them know at home what a failure I was as an English woman. I mortified my husband's sisters all the time. Just think—after a whole year I often forgot to say 'Fawncy, now!' and used to say 'Good gracious!' instead; and I don't believe I could get the hang of when to use 'lawt' and 'gawt' the way that they do if I lived there for a century."

Jack laughed.

"My husband's sisters were very unhappy about it. They did want to love me, because I had so much money; but it was tough work for them. Did you ever know any middle-aged English young ladies?" she asked him, suddenly.

"No; I never did," he said.

"Really, they seem to be a thing apart that can't grow anywhere but in England. Every married man has not less than two nor more than three, and they always are a little gray and embroider very nicely. Some one told me that as long as there's any hope they are athletic, but as soon as it's hopeless they take to embroidering."

"It must be rather a blue day for them when they decide definitely to make the change," said Jack.

"I never thought of that," said Mrs. Rosscott, soberly. "Of course it must! I was always very good to them, too. I gave them ever so many things that I could have used longer myself, and they used to set pieces of muslin in behind the open-work places and wear them."

She sighed.

"It's quite as bad as being a Girton girl," she said. "Do you know what a Girton girl is?"

"No; I don't."

"It's a girl from Girton College. It's the most awful freak you ever saw. They're really quite beyond everything. They're so homely, and their hands and

feet are so enormous, and their pins never pin, and their belts never belt. And no one has ever married one of them yet."

She paused dramatically.

"I won't, either, then," he declared.

She laughed at that, and touched up the cob a trifle.

"Did you live long in England?" he asked.

"Forever!" she answered, with emphasis; "at least, it seemed like forever. Mamma left me there when I was nineteen (she married me off before she left me, of course) and I stayed there until last winter—until I was out of my mourning, you know— and then I was on the Continent for a while, and then I returned to papa."

"How do we strike you after your long absence?"

"Oh, you suit me admirably," she said, turning and smiling squarely into his face; "only the terrible 'and' of the majority does get on my nerves somewhat."

"What 'and'?"

"Haven't you noticed? Why, when an American runs out of talking material he just rests on one poor little 'and' until a fresh run of thought overwhelms him; you listen to the next person you're talking with, and you'll hear what I mean."

Jack reflected.

"I will," he said, at last.

The road went sweeping in and out among a thicket of bare tree trunks and brown copses, and the sunlight fell out of the blue sky above straight down upon their heads.

"If it don't annoy you, my referring to England so often," said she, presently, "I will state that this reminds me of Kaysmere, the country place of my father-in-law."

"Is your father-in-law living yet?"

"Dear me, yes—and still has hold of the title that I supposed I was getting when I was married to his oldest son. My father-in-law is a particularly healthy old gentleman of eighty. He was forty years old when he married. He didn't expect to marry, you know—he couldn't see his way to ever affording it. But he jumped into the title suddenly, and then, of course, he married right away. He had to. You'd know what a hurry he must have been in to look at my mamma-in-law's portrait."

"Was she so very beautiful?"

"No; she was so very homely. Matilda's very like her."

Jack laughed.

She laughed, too.

"Aren't we happy together?" she asked.

"My sky knows but one cloud," he rejoined, "and that is that Monday comes after Sunday."

"But we shall meet again," said Mrs. Rosscott. "Because," she added, mischievously, "I don't suppose that it's on account of my Cousin Maude that you rebel at the approach of Monday."

"No," said Jack. "It may not be polite to say so to you, but I wasn't in the least thinking of your cousin."

"Poor girl!" said Mrs. Rosscott, thoughtfully; "and she was so sweet to you, too. Absolutely I don't believe that the edges of her smile came together once while you were talking to her last evening."

"Did you spy on us to that extent?" said Jack. "I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"Oh, I'm very awful," she said, airily. "You'll be more surprised the farther you penetrate into the wilderness of my ways."

"And when will I have the chance to plunge into the jungle, do you think?"

"Any Saturday or Sunday that you happen to be in town."

"Are you going to live in town?"

"For a while. I've taken a house until the beginning of July. I expect some friends over, and I want to entertain them."

Jack felt the sky above become refulgent. He was in the habit of spending *every* Saturday night in the city—he and Burnett together.

"May I come as often as I like?" he asked.

"Certainly," said she; "because you know if you should come too often I can tell the man at the door to say I'm 'not at home' to you."

"But if he ever says: 'She's not at home to you,' I shall walk right in and fall upon the man that you are being at home to just then."

"But he's a very large man," said Mrs. Rosscott, seriously; "he's larger than you are, I think."

Jack was conscious of a fresh shock.

"But I'm way over six feet," he said, his heart going heavily faster, even while he told himself that he might have known it, anyhow.

"He's all of six feet two," she said, meditatively. "I do believe he's even taller. I remember liking him at the first glance, just because he struck me as so royal-looking."

He was miserably conscious of acute distress.

"Do—do you mind my smoking?" he stammered.

(Might have known that, *of course*, there was bound to be *some one* like that.)

"Not at all," she rejoined, amiably. "I like the odor of cigarettes. Shall I stop a little while you set yourself afire?"

"It isn't necessary," he said. "I can set myself afire under any circumstances."

He lit a cigarette.

"Is he English?" he couldn't help asking then.

"Yes," she said; "I like the English."

"You appear to like eveything to-day." He did not intend to sound bitter, but he did it unintentionally.

(Confounded luck some fellows have!)

"I do. I'm very well content to-day."

He was silent, thinking.

"Well?" she queried, after a while.

He pulled himself together with an effort.

"I think perhaps it's just as well," he said.

"What is just as well?"

"That I know."

"Know what?"

"About him. I shan't ever take the chances of calling on you now."

She laughed.

"He wouldn't kick you out unless I told him to," she said. "You needn't be too afraid of him, you know."

His face grew a trifle flushed.

"I'm not afraid," he said, as coldly as it was in him to speak; "but I'll leave him the field."

She turned and looked at him.

"The field?" she asked, with puzzled eyebrows.

"Yes."

Then she frowned for an instant, and then a species of thought-ray suddenly flew across her face, and she burst out laughing.

"Why, I do believe," she cried, merrily, "I do believe you're jealous of the man at the door."

"Weren't you speaking of a man in the drawing room?" he asked, all her phrases recurring to his mind together.

"No," she said, laughing; "I was speaking of my footman. Oh, you *are* so funny!"

His horizon glowed again so suddenly that he quite lost his head, and, leaning downward, kissed the hand that held the reins.

"I'm not funny," he said. "It was the most natural thing in the world."

She curbed her laughter.

"You'd better not be foolish," she said, warningly. "It don't mix well with college."

"I'm thinking of cutting college," he declared, boldly.

"Don't let us decide anything definite until we've known another twenty-four whole hours," she said, looking at him with a gravity that was almost maternal; and then she turned the horse's head toward home.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE OTHER MAN.

That evening Burnett felt it necessary to give his friend a word of warning.

"Holloway's going to take Betty in to-night," he said, as they descended their tower stair together.

"Who's Holloway?" Jack asked.

"You can't expect to have her all the time, you know," Burnett continued. "She's really one of the biggest guns here, even if she is one of the family."

"Who's Holloway?"

"Last night the mater had her all mapped out for General Jiggs, and I had an awful time getting her off his hook and on to yours, and then you drove her all this morning and walked her all the afternoon, and the old lady says she's got to play in Holloway's yard to-night—jus' lil' bit, you know."

"Who's Holloway?" Jack demanded.

"You know Horace Holloway; we were up at his place once for the night. Don't you remember?"

"I remember his place well enough; but he hadn't got in when we came, and hadn't got up when we left, so his features aren't as distinctly imprinted on my memory as they might be."

"That's so," said Burnett, pushing aside the curtains that concealed the foot of the wee stair; "I'd forgotten. Well, you'll meet him to-night, anyhow; he came on the five-five. Holly's a nice fellow, only he's so darned over-full of good advice that he keeps you feeling withersome."

"Who will I have for dinner?" the guest inquired, glancing around to see if there were any silver tissues or distracting curls in sight.

"Well," his friend replied, rather hesitatingly, "you must expect to balance up for last night, I reckon."

"Your cousin, I suppose," Jack said.

Burnett nodded.

"She wanted you," he said. "She's taken a fancy to you, and she can afford to marry for love," he added.

"I'm thankful that I can, too," the other replied, fervently.

Burnett laughed at the fervor.

"You make me think of her teacher," he said. "She sings, and when she was sixteen she meant to outrank Patti; she was lots homelier then."

"Oh, I say!" Jack cried. "I can believe 'most anything, but——"

Burnett laughed, and then sobered.

"She was," he said, solemnly; "she really and truly *was*. And her mother said to her teacher, there in Dresden: 'She will be *the* greatest soprano, won't she?' And *he* said: 'Madame, she has only that one chance—to be *the* greatest.'"

Jack laughed.

"But why 'Lorne'?" he asked, suddenly. "Why not 'Burnett,' since she's your uncle's child?"

"Oh, that's straight enough; there's a hyphen there. My uncle died and my aunt married a title. My aunt's Lady Chiheleywicks, but the family name is Lorne. And you pronounce my aunt's name Chix."

"I'm glad I know," said Jack.

Just then voices and rustlings became apparent in many directions, and Aunt Mary's nephew wondered if any other fellow present had such a tempest within his bosom as he himself was conscious of attempting to regulate unperceived. And then, after all, she wasn't among the influx. Miss Maude was, though, and he had to go up to her and talk to her; and terribly dull, hard labor it was.

While he was rolling the Sisyphus stone of conversation uphill for the sixth or seventh time, Jack noticed a gentleman pass by and throw a more than ordinarily interested glance their way. He was a very well-built, fairly good-sized man of thirty-five or forty years, with a handsome, uninteresting face and heavy, sleepy, dark eyes.

"Who is that?" he asked of his companion.

"Don't you know?" she said, in surprise. "That's Mr. Holloway. He's just come. Oh, he's so horrid! I think he's just too awfully horrid for any use."

"Why?"

"Because he does such mean things. I just know Bob must have told you how he treated me. Bob's always telling it. Bob thinks it's so funny he's always telling it. Surely he's told you."

"No, never," said Jack, his eyes riveted on the staircase; "he never told me. But do tell me. I'll enjoy hearing your side of it."

"But I haven't any side. It's just Horace Holloway's meanness. There's nothing funny."

"But tell me anyway."

"Do you really want to hear?"

"Indeed I do."

"Well, it's just that we were up in the mountains, and I was rowing myself, and the boat didn't go well, and Mr.

Holloway came down off the hotel piazza and called to me that she needed ballast, and—and I said: 'Is that the trouble?' And he said: 'Yes; row ashore, and I'll ballast you.' And so, of course I rowed ashore to get him, and (of course, I supposed he meant himself), and when I was up by the dock he picked up a great stone and dropped it in, and shoved me off, and called after me: 'She'll go better now,' and—everyone laughed!"

Miss Lorne stopped, breathless.

"I never would have believed it of him," Jack exclaimed, turning to see where Holloway kept his sense of humor; but just as his eyes fell upon the latter, the latter's eyes altered and suddenly became so bright and intent that his observer involuntarily turned his own gaze quickly in the same direction.

It was Mrs. Rosscott who was approaching, all in cerise with lines of Chantilly lace sweeping about her. It seemed a cruelty to every woman present that she should be so beautiful. Jack wanted to fly and fall at her feet, but he couldn't, of course—he was tied to her hyphenated cousin.

But Holloway went forward and greeted her with all possible *empressement*, and the man who was so much his junior felt an awful weight of youth upon him as he saw her led out of his sight.

"I think dear Betty will marry Mr. Holloway," her cousin chirped, blandly (thus settling *her* hash forever). "He came over in her party, you know, and —she's always been fond of him."

Jack suddenly recollected how Mrs. Rosscott had commented on the terrible tendency to land upon "and," and wondered why he had never noticed before how disagreeable said tendency was.

(Going to marry Holloway!)

"But, then, dear Cousin Betty's such a coquette that no one can ever tell whom she does like. She's very insincere."

Jack twisted uneasily. If there was any comfort to be derived from Miss Lorne's last speech, it was certainly of a most chilly sort.

(Probably going to marry Holloway!)

"Now, I think it's too bad, when there are so many simple, sweet girls in the world that men just adore——"

He stood up suddenly. He couldn't help it. He was crazed, maddened, choked, stifled. The fates must intervene and rescue his reason or else——

There was a blessed sound—the announcing of dinner.

. . . . . .

Later there was music in the great, white *salon* where the organ was. Maude Lorne sang, and the man with the monocle accompanied her on the organ. Mrs. Rosscott sat on a divan between Holloway and General Jiggs. Jack was left out in the cold.

(Surely in love with Holloway!)

It was only twenty-six hours since he had first met her, and he hated to consider his life as unalterably blasted, or to even give up the fight. Nevertheless, whenever he looked across the room he saw fresh signs of the most awful kind. Even the way that she didn't trouble to trouble over the one man, but devoted herself to General Jiggs, was in itself a very bad portent.

Finally he went up to his own room and put on another collar, and thought about it a bit. After a while he went back downstairs. She was gone, and Holloway, too. He felt very unhappy. It was so damned unjust for one man to be thirty-five while another—just as decent a fellow in every way—was in college. He——"

A hand touched his arm.

He turned from where he was standing in the window recess, and looked into her eyes.

"I'm very wicked, am I not?" she asked, looking up at him so straight and honest.

"I can't admit that," he replied.

"But I am. I know it myself. What Bob told you was all true. I'm a heartless wretch."

She spoke so earnestly that his heart sank lower and lower.

"I wanted to speak to you about tomorrow morning," she said, after a little

pause. "You know we were going to drive at ten together, and—and I wondered if—— You see, Mr. Holloway's an old friend, and he's had so much to tell me to-night, and he isn't half through——"

"Of course I don't mind," said poor Jack. "You go with him. It's—it's quite one to me."

She gave a tiny little start.

"Oh, I didn't mean that at all," she cried. "I meant—I meant—it's all a little tiring, and to-morrow's Sunday anyway, so couldn't we go out at eleven instead of ten?"

She looked so sweetly questioning, and his relief was so great, and his joy——

(Probably don't care a rap for Holloway!)

—so intense, that he could hardly refrain from seizing her in his arms.

But he only seized her little hand instead and pressed it fervently to his lips. When he raised his eyes she was smiling, and her smile filled him with happiness.

"You're such a boy!" she said, softly, and turned and left him there in the window recess alone again.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DEVELOPMENTS.

It was during that drive the next morning that Jack, buoyed up by memories of Saturday and hopes of coming Saturdays, poured out the history of his whole life at Mrs. Rosscott's knees. He told her all about Aunt Mary, and *his* side of the cat, the cabman, and Kalamazoo. It interested her, for she had arrived too recently to have had it all in the newspapers beforehand, but when he spoke of Aunt Mary's last letter she grew large-eyed and shook her head gravely.

"You will have to be very good now," she said, seriously.

"Why?" he asked. "Just to keep from being disinherited? That wouldn't be so awful."

"Wouldn't it be awful to you?" she asked, turning her bright eyes upon him. "What could be worse?"

"Things," he said, very vaguely.

Then she touched up the cob a little, and, after a minute or two, as she said nothing, he continued:

"I'd almost fancy quitting college and going to work. I was thinking about it last night."

She touched up the cob a little more, and remained silent.

Finally he said:

"What would *you* think of my doing that?"

"I don't know," she said, slowly. "You see, I'm a great philosopher. I never fret or worry, because I regard it as useless; similarly, I never rebel at the way fate shapes my life—I regard that as a something past helping. I believe in predestination; do you?"

She turned and looked at him so seriously—so unlike her *riant* self—that he felt startled, and did not know what to say for a minute.

Then:

"I don't know," he said, slowly; "I don't know as I'd dare to. It rather startles me to think that maybe all of our future is laid out now."

"It don't startle me," she said. "It seems to me the only natural plan of the universe. I believe that everything that crosses our path—down to the tiniest gnat—comes there in the fulfillment of a purpose."

"I'm sure that all the mosquitoes that ever crossed my path came there in the fulfillment of a purpose," Jack interrupted. "I never doubted *that*."

She smiled a little.

"It's the same with people," she went on.

"Only less painful," he interrupted again.

"Sometimes not," she said, with a look that silenced him. "Sometimes much more so—my Cousin Maude, for example."

"Hip, hip, hurrah for the mosquito!" he murmured. They laughed softly together. Then she grew earnest, and looked so grave that he became serious, too.

"There is always a purpose," she said, with a touch of some feeling which he had never guessed at. "If you and I

have met, it is because we are to have some influence over one another. I can't just see how; I can't form any idea——"

"I can," he said, eagerly.

She looked up so suddenly and steadily that he was silent.

"Do not let us play any longer," she said. "Let us be in earnest."

"But I *am* in earnest," he asseverated.

"You don't know what I mean," she went on, very gently. "You're in college. Let's fight it out on those lines if it takes all summer."

He looked up into her face, and loved her better than ever for the frank kindliness that shone in her eyes.

The day passed blithely after that, and even the good-nights, which were good-bys, too, were not so fraught with hopelessness as he had dreaded.

For he was to call on her in town as often as he wished, and he felt that that would be pretty often.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RESOLUTION HE TOOK.

That first meeting was in February, you know, and by the last of April it had been followed by so many others that Burnett remarked one day to his chum:

"Say, aren't you going a little faster than auntie'll stand for?"

Jack turned in surprise.

"I never went so straight in my life before," he exclaimed, not in indignation but in astonishment.

"I didn't mean that," said Burnett. "Perhaps instead of 'auntie' I should have said 'Betty.'"

Jack hoisted the colors of Harvard, and was silent.

"I warned you at first that that was Tangle-town," his friend went on. "Don't suppose I'm saying anything against her—or against you; but she's just as much to ten other men as she is to you, and they all are old enough to carry lots of weight."

"And I suppose I'm not," Jack answered, going over by the fireplace. "I know that as well as anyone, of course."

"*Natürlich*," said Burnett, with a conclusiveness that was not meant to be cruel, yet cut like a two-edged knife.

There was silence in the room. Jack stood by the chimney-piece, his hands upraised to rest upon its lofty shelf, his head dropped forward, and his eyes fixed on the empty blackness below.

"I wonder," he said at last, "I wonder what will become of me if—if——"

He stopped.

Burnett didn't speak.

"I suppose she thinks of me as a boy," the young man continued. "I suppose she's so good to me because I'm her youngest brother's friend."

Burnett did not comment on this speech.

"I don't know what to do," the other said. "When I first met her I wanted to cut college and get out in the world and go to work like a man. I told her so. But she wanted me to stay in college, and as it was the first thing she'd ever wanted of me, I did it. I'd do anything she asked me. I've quit drinking, I'm going at everything as hard as it's in me to go; but—I don't know—I feel—I feel as if it isn't me—it's just because she wants me to, and I'm afraid if she goes out of my life I'd—I'd——"

After this very broken chain of phrasing, with its specially broken ending, he stopped, and another long silence ensued.

It was finally terminated by the brother's saying:

"You must confess, old man, that you aren't fixed so as to be able to say one really serious word to any woman—unless it was, 'Wait.'"

"I know that," Jack answered; "but I suppose——"

"She'd be taking so many chances," the friend interrupted. "A man in college is never the real thing. You'd better give it up."

Jack whirled about and faced him.

"Give it up, did you say?" he asked, almost angrily.

"Yes; that's what."

For a minute they looked at one another. Then:

"I shall never give it up," the lover said, very slowly and steadily—"never until she gives me up."

Burnett sucked in his breath with a sudden compression of his lips.

"All right, old man," he said, not unkindly; "but I don't believe you'll ever get her, and that's flat. There are too many being entered for that race, and long before you and I get out of here she'll be Mrs. Somebody-else."

Jack stared at him as if he hardly heard, and then suddenly he stepped nearer and spoke.

"Did she ask you to have this talk with me?"

"No," said her brother, in surprise; "she never says anything about you to me."

A look of relief fled across the other's face, and then a look of resolution succeeded it.

"I'm not going to be discouraged," he said; "not for a while, at any rate."

"You'd better be."

Jack laughed. The laugh sounded a trifle hollow, but still it was a laugh, and that in itself was a triumph of which none but himself might ever measure the extent.

Because in that moment he decided to lay the whole case before her the next time that he went to town, and the coming to a resolution was a relief from the uncertainty that clouded his days and nights—even if a further black curtain of darkest doubt hung before the possibilities of what her answer might be.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DOWNFALL OF HOPE.

It was on a Saturday about the middle of May that Jack came to town, his mind well braced with love and arguments, and his main thought being that when he returned something would be settled.

It was a beautiful day, warm and sunny, and at five in the afternoon both of the drawing-room windows of Mrs. Rosscott's house were wide open, and the lace curtains were taking the breeze like little sails.

Just as Jack mounted the steps, the door opened, and a plainly-dressed, unattractive-looking man was let out. The servant who did the letting out saw Jack, and let him in without closing the door between the egress of the one and the ingress of the other. So he entered without ringing, and, as he was very well known and intensely popular with all Mrs. Rosscott's servants, the man invited him to walk up unannounced, since he himself was just "bringing in the tea."

Jack went upstairs, and because the carpet was of thickly piled velvet and his boots were the boots of a well-shod gentleman, he made no noise whatever in the so doing.

There were double parlors above stairs in the domicile which Burnett's sister had taken until July, and they were furnished in the most correct and trying mode of Louis XIV. Behind them was a library where no mode at all prevailed except the terribly *démodé* thing known as comfort. To prevent her visitors, when seated amid the correct carving of French art, from looking longingly through at the easy-chairs of American manufacture, Mrs. Rosscott had ordered that the blue velvet portières which hung between should never be pushed aside.

It was owing to this order that Jack, entering the drawing rooms, heard voices, but could not see into the library beyond; also it was owing to this order that those in the library could not see or hear Jack.

It may be understood that, had Mrs. Rosscott known that Jack (or anyone else) was within hearing, she would not have said, laughing (as she *did* say, laughing):

"Kisses barred! Kisses barred!"

Also Holloway, had *he* known that anyone was within hearing, would certainly have *never* answered:

"Certainly," in a calm and careless tone.

Jack, the eavesdropper, stood transfixed at the voices and speeches, and forgot every other consideration in the overwhelming sickness of soul which overcame him that instant.

"Darling," said Holloway, a second or two later (and this time his voice was not calm and careless, but deep and im-

passioned), "the letter was very sweet, and if you knew how I longed to take the tired little girl to my bosom and comfort her troubles, and replace them by joys!"

"Will that day *ever* come, do you think?" Mrs. Rosscott answered, in low tones, which nevertheless were most painfully clear and distinct in the next room.

"It must," Holloway replied, "just as surely as that I hold this dear little hand——"

Jack never knew more, because he turned and went out of the rooms, back down the stairs and out of the door, closed it noiselessly behind him, and found himself out in a world which, although bright and sunny to all the rest of mankind, had turned dark, lonely and cheerless to him.

At first he hardly knew what to do with himself, he was so altogether used up by the discovery just made. But he went downtown and took a drink in a half-dazed way; and, because it was quite two months since his last indulgence, its suggestion was potent.

Burnett was Sundaying at the ancestral castle; and Burnett wasn't the warning sort, anyhow. He was always tow and pitch for any species of flame. So his absence counted for nothing in the crisis.

And what ensued was a crisis—a crisis with a vengeance.

That tear upon which Aunt Mary's nephew went was something lurid and awful. It lasted until Monday, and then its owner returned to college, as ill of body and as embittered of spirit as it was in him to be. The lightsome devil who had ruled him up to his meeting with Mrs. Rosscott resumed its sway with terrible force. The authorities showed a tendency to patience because young Denham had appeared to reform lately and had been working hard; but young Denham felt no thankful sentiments for their leniency, and proved his position shortly.

There was a man named Tweedwell whom circumstances threw directly in the path of destruction. Tweedwell was an inoffensive mortal who was studying for the ministry. He was progressive in his ideas, and believed that a clergyman, to hold a great influence, should know his world. He thought that knowledge of the world was to be gained by skirting the outside edge of every species of worldliness. The result of this course of action was not what it should have been, for Tweedwell was an easy mark for all who wanted fun, and the consciousness of his innocence so little accelerated the pace at which he got out of the way that he was always being called to account for what he hadn't done.

The Saturday night after his Saturday in town, Jack concocted a piece of deviltry which was as dangerous as it was foolish. The result was that an explosion took place, and the author of the gunpowder plot had all the skin on both hands blistered. Burnett, in escaping, fell and broke his collar bone and two ribs. The house in which the affair took place caught fire, and was badly damaged. And Tweedwell was arrested on the strongest kind of circumstantial evidence, and had to answer for the whole. Naturally, in the investigation that followed, the two who were guilty had to confess or see the candidate for the ministry disgraced forever.

The result of their confession was that Burnett's father (a jovial, peppery old gentleman—we all know the kind) lost patience completely, and wrote his son that he'd better not come home again that year. Aunt Mary also lost her temper completely, and, summoning Mr. Stebbins in hot haste, changed her will and disinherited the prodigal.

She might not have acted so hastily had the disastrous news arrived either a week later or a week earlier; but it came just in the middle of a discouraging ten days' downpour, which had caused a dam to break and a chain of valuable cranberry bogs to be drowned out for that year. The cranberry bogs were especially dear to their owner's heart.

"Why can't they drain 'em?" she had asked Lucinda, who was particularly nutcracker-like in appearance since her quarantine episode.

"'Pears like they're lower'n every-

where else," Lucinda answered, her words sounding as if she had sharpened them on a grindstone.

Aunt Mary bit her lip and glared out at the rain. She felt mad all the way through, and longed to take it out on some one.

Ten minutes after, Joshua came in with the mail, and she was given the opportunity to take it out on Jack.

And she did so, with a vengeance.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WOES OF THE DISINHERITED.

Holloway was calling on Bertha Rosscott.

They sat in that comfortable library previously referred to, and were sweetly unaware that any untoward series of incidents had ever led to an invasion of their privacy.

Holloway lay well back in a sleepy-hollow chair and looked indolently, lazily handsome; his hostess was up on—well, up on the divan, and he had the full benefit of her admirable bottines and their dainty heels and buckles.

"Honestly," he said, looking her over with a gaze that was at once roving and well content, "honestly, I think that every time I see you, you appear more attractive than the time before."

"It's very nice of you to say so," she replied. "And, of course, I believe you, for every time that I get a new gown I think that very same thing myself. Still, I do regard it as strange if I look nicely to-day, for I've been crying like a baby all the morning."

"You—crying! And why?"

She raised her eyes to his.

"Such *bad* news!" she said, simply.

"From where? Of whom?"

"From mamma, about Bob."

"Is he ill?"

"It isn't that. He's done something—got into some trouble—and papa is so very, very angry."

Holloway looked relieved.

"Your father won't stay angry long, and you know it," he said. "Just think how often he has lost his temper over the boys and how often he's found it again."

"It isn't just Bob," said Mrs. Rosscott. "I've some one else on my mind, too."

"Who, pray?"

"His friend."

"Young Denham?"

"Yes."

With that she threw her head up and looked very straightly at her caller, whose visage shaded ever so slightly in spite of himself.

"Did you cry some for him, too?" he asked, smiling, but unable to altogether do away with a species of parenthetical reflection in his voice.

"I cried more for him than I did for Bob," she admitted, boldly.

"He is a fortunate boy! But why the tears in his case?"

"I felt so badly to be so disappointed in him."

"Did you expect to work a miracle, then, my dear? Did you think to reform such an inveterate young reprobate with a glance?"

"I'm not sure that I ever asked myself either of those questions," she replied, slowly; "but he promised me something, and I expected him to keep his word."

"Men don't keep such promises, Bertha," the visitor said. "You shouldn't have expected it."

"I don't know why not."

"Because a man who drinks will drink again."

"I didn't refer to drinking," she said, quietly. "It was quite another thing."

"Ah!"

She looked down at her rings and seemed to consider how much of her confidence she should give him, and the consideration led her to look up presently and say:

"He promised me that if he could not call any week he would write me a line instead. He came to town last week, and he neither called or wrote. That wasn't like the man I saw in him. I can't understand, and I'm disappointed."

Holloway took out his cigarette case, and turned it over and over thoughtfully in his hands.

"He's nothing but a boy," he said at last, with an effort.

"He's no boy," she said. "He's almost twenty-two years old. He's a man."

"Some are men at twenty-two, and some are boys," Holloway remarked, rising. "I was a man before I was eighteen—a man out in the world of men. But Denham's a boy."

He rose as he spoke, and she held out her hand for him to raise her, too.

"It's early to go," she remarked, parenthetically.

"I know," he replied; "but I hear some one being shown into the drawing room. I don't feel formal to-day, and if I can't lounge in here alone with you I'd rather go."

"How egotistical!" she commented.

"I am egotistical," he admitted.

And went.

The footman passed him in the hall; he had a card upon his silver salver, and was seeking his mistress in the library. But when he entered there the room was empty. Mrs. Rosscott had slipped through the blue velvet portières, expecting to see a friend, and had stopped short on the other side, amazed at finding herself face to face with an utter stranger.

"I gave the man my card," said the stranger, in a tone as faded as his mustache. He was a long, thin man, but what the Germans style *"sehr korrect."*

"I didn't wait to get it," the hostess said. "I supposed that, of course, it was somebody that I knew."

"That was natural," he admitted.

There was a slight pause of awkwardness.

"Won't you sit down?" she asked.

"Certainly," said the caller, and sat down.

Then she sat down, too, and another awkward pause ensued.

"Why don't you ask me my business?" the caller demanded, with a smile. "I must have come for some reason, you know."

"I was wondering how to begin," she told him, frankly.

"My name is Clover," he said, then. "Of course, as you never saw me before, you want to know that first of all."

"I'd choose to know," she said. And then the uncompromising neutrality of her expression deepened so plainly that he hastened to add:

"I'm H. Wyncoop Clover."

"Oh!" she said. And then smiled, too; having heard the name before.

"I go to school with your little brother," said H. Wyncoop, "and the reason of my presence in your house is that, as he is rather under a cloud just at present, and as I was coming to town, we clubbed together to bring you a letter about him. He was going to dictate it, but in the end Mitchell wrote it all. Here it is."

With that he put his hand into his pocket, drew out an envelope, and handed it to her.

"How awfully good of you all," she said, gratefully. "Do excuse my reading it at once, won't you? You see, I've been so anxious——"

He nodded understandingly, and she hastily tore open the envelope and ran her eyes over the written sheets inside.

MY DEAR MRS. ROSSCOTT: Being the prize writer of the class, I am chosen to take down the ante-mortem confessions of our shattered friend. It is in a sad hour for him that I do so, because I am so naturally truthful that I shall not force you to look for my meanings between the lines. On the contrary, I shall set the cold facts out as neatly as the pickets on a fence. And in evidence thereof, I open the ball by telling you frankly that they both look fierce. If they had looked less awful, and Burnett had had more lime in his bones, we might have escaped the Powers That Be by simply admitting a sprained ankle and carefully concealing everything else. But if one man cracks where you can't finish the deal, even by the most unlimited outlay of mucilage and persistence, and another blazes his whole surface-area in a manner that seems to make the underbrush dubious to count on forever henceforth; why, you then have a logarithm the square of which is probably as far beyond your depth as I am beyond my own just at this point of this sentence.

The long and short of my fresh start is, that your brother wants to write you, but he is so handicapped (forgive me, but you're the only one who hasn't had that joke sprung on them!) with bandages, that it's cruel to expect much of him. It is true that he has his bosom friend to fall back upon, but if you could see that friend as we see him these days you wouldn't be sure whether it was true or not. The old woman, who had the peddler-and-petticoat episode, was not in it the same day with your brother's friend! I

do assure you. And anyhow—even if he still has brains—his writing apparatus is all done up in arnica, so there you are!

But do not allow me to alarm you unduly! When all's said and done, they're not so badly off physically. Hair and ribs are mere vanities, anyhow, and we're here to-day and gone to-morrow!

Something much worse than mere disfigurements and broken bones has sprung forth from chaos, and has almost stared them out of countenance since. It is the wolf that is at their door, and the howling and prowling of their particular wolf is not to be sneezed at, let me tell you. To put a modern political face upon an ancient Greek fable, the wolf in their case symbolizes the bitter question of whose roof is going to roof them when they get out of the plaster casts that are bed and board to them just at present. Where are they to go? All those which used to be open to them are suddenly shut tight. They've both been expelled, and both been disinherited. If I was inclined to look on the blue side of the blanket, I should certainly feel that they were playing in very tough luck. Burnett, of course, can come to you, and his soul is full of the wish to bring his fellow-fright along with him. Which wish of his is the gist of my epistle. *Can* he bring him? He wants to know before he broaches the proposition. I'm to be skinned alive if Jack ever learns that such a plea was made, so I beg you whatever other rash acts you see fit to commit during your meteoric flight across my plane of existence, don't ever give me away. Firstly, because if I ever get a chance to do so, I'm positive that I should want to cling to you as the mistletoe does to the oak, and could not bear to be given away; and secondly, because I'm so attached to my own skin that I should really suffer pain if it was taken from me by force. Bob wants you to think it over, and let him know as to the whats and whens by return mail.

You are so inspiring that I could write you all day, but those relics of what once was, but alas! will never be again, need to be rolled up afresh in absorbent cotton, and so I must nail my Red Cross on to my left arm, and get down to business. If you saw how useful I am to your brother, you'd thank his lucky stars that I came through myself with nothing worse than getting my ear stepped on. I was hugging the ladder (being canny and careful), and the man above me toed in? Isn't it curious to think that if he'd worn braces in early youth *my* ear would be all right now.

Behold me at your feet.

Respectfully yours,

HERBERT KENDRICK MITCHELL.

When Mrs. Rosscott had finished the letter she looked across at her caller, and said:

"You've read this, haven't you?"

"No," said he. "I tried to unstick it two or three times coming on the train, but it was too much for me."

"Don't you really know what it says?" she asked, more earnestly.

"Yes, I do," Clover answered, more earnestly; "but Denham must never know that I do."

"I won't tell him," she said, smiling faintly. "But surely he can't be as badly off as this says. Has he really lost all his hair?"

"Not all—only in spots," Clover reassured her; but then his recollections overcame him, and he added, with a grin: "But he's a fearful-looking specimen, all right, though."

"About my brother," she went on, turning the letter thoughtfully in her fingers; "when can he be moved, do they think?"

"Any time next week."

"I'll write him," she said. "I'll write him and tell him that everything will be arranged for—for—for them both."

Clover sprang to his feet.

"Oh, thank you," he exclaimed. "That's most awfully good in you!"

"Not at all," she answered. "I'm very glad to be able to welcome them. You must impress that upon them—particularly—particularly on my brother."

Clover smiled.

"I will," he said, rising to go.

"I'd ask you to stay longer," she said, holding out her hand, "but I'm due at a charity entertainment to-night, and I have to go very early."

"I know," he said; "I've come up on purpose to go to it."

"Then I shall see you there?" she asked him.

"It will be what I shall be looking forward to most of all," he said.

And then he went out.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DOVE OF PEACE.

The first result of Mrs. Rosscott's invitation was that Jack refused it. He said that he had a sister of his own—two, if it came to that—and so he could

easily manage for himself. He was very decided about it, and somewhat lofty and bitter—a stand which no one understood his taking.

But Mrs. Rosscott—strong in the sense of her perfect irresistibleness—was not to be balked in her hospitable intentions. When Jack's decision was communicated to her, she simply took the train and went down to see what was to be done. She wrote to Mitchell first and he arranged it all, and met her at the depot, where they were mutually surprised—he to find her so lovely, and she to find him so homely. For the ancestors of Mitchell had worn kilts and red hair in centuries gone by, and, although he proved the truth of the red-hair proposition, no one would ever believe anything of his build could ever have been induced to have put itself into kilts—not knowingly. Furthermore, his voice had a crick in it, and went by jerks, and his eyebrows sympathized with his voice, and the eyes below them were little and gray and twinkling, and altogether he was that sort of man who is termed—according to a certain style of phrasing—"above suspicion." Mrs. Rosscott sized him up at a glance, and felt quite safe after that in trusting herself to him, in telling him exactly what she wanted to do, and in asking him all that she wanted to know.

Mitchell certainly had a talent for plotting, for when they reached the house where the culprits were temporarily domiciled, Burnett had gone out to give his mended ribs some exercise, and Jack was reading alone in the room where they shared one another's liniments with friendly generosity.

The arch-conspirator went upstairs, came down, and then, seeking the lady whom he had left in the parlor, said to her:

"Denham's up there alone. Why don't you just go up and say whatever you have to say? You know the old saying that 'In union there is strength.' Well, you've got him alone now, and maybe he'll prove more weakly as a consequence."

Then he walked straight over by the window and picked up a magazine quite as if it was all settled, and she only hesitated for half a second before she turned and went upstairs.

There was a door half open in the hall above, and she knew that that must be *the* door. She tapped at it lightly, and a man's voice (a voice that she knew well) called out, gruffly:

"Come in!"

She pushed the door open at that and entered, and saw Jack, and he saw her. He turned very pale at the sight, and then the color flooded his face, and he rose from his chair abruptly, and put his hand up to the strips that held the bandage on his head.

"Burnett isn't here," he said, quickly. "He went out just a few minutes ago."

His tone was hard, and yet at the same time it shook slightly.

She approached him, holding out her hand.

"I'm glad of that," she said, "because it was to see you that I came."

Something mutinous and scornful flashed in his eyes as he rolled a chair forward for her.

"You honor me," he said, and his tone and manner both hardened. His general appearance was that of a man ten years older; he had changed terribly in the weeks since she had last seen him.

"Don't speak like that," she said. "It isn't your way, and I know you too well—we know one another too well—to be anything but sincere. You owe me something, too, and if I forbear you should understand why."

"I owe you something, do I?" he asked. "What do I owe you except cups of tea; and that debt, with interest, has been kept paid in violets? You know that as well as I do."

Mrs. Rosscott caught her under lip in her teeth.

"You gave me a promise, Mr. Denham," she said, quite low, but most distinctly—"a promise which you broke."

Jack flushed; his eyelids drooped for a minute.

"I didn't break it," he said. "I gave it up."

"Is there any difference?"

"A great difference."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you want to have the truth?" he said. "If you really do, I'll tell you. But I don't ask to tell you, recollect."

She looked at him in surprise.

"I don't understand," she said. "Tell me what you mean."

He raised his hand to his bandaged head again.

"I think," he said, fighting hard to speak with utter indifference, "I think that it would have been better if you had told me about Holloway."

She looked still more surprised.

"What should I tell you about Mr. Holloway?" she asked. "What could I tell you about him?"

"It isn't any use speaking like that," he said; and then he suddenly leaped from his chair and began to plunge back and forth across the small room. "I know now! I understand now! You're pretty, and awfully fascinating, and it's always fun for the woman—especially if she knows all her bets are safely hedged. And I was so completely done up that I was even more sport than the common run, I suppose; but"—she was staring at him in unfeigned amazement, and he was lashing himself to fury with the feelings that underlaid his words—"but even if you made it all right with yourself by calling your share by the name of 'having a good influence' over me (I know that's how married women always pat themselves on the back while they're sending us to the devil), even then, I think that it would have been better to have been fair and square with me. It would have been better all around. I'd have been left with some belief in—in people. As it is, when I saw that you'd only been laughing at me, I—well, I went pretty far."

He stopped short, and transfixed her paleness with his big, dark eyes.

"Why weren't you honest?" he asked, angrily. And then he said again, more bitterly, more scornfully, than ever: "Why wasn't I told about Holloway?"

She clasped her hands tightly together.

"What has been told you about Mr. Holloway and myself?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Then why do you speak as you do?"

At that he thrust his hands in his pockets, and again began to fling himself back and forth across the room.

"Perhaps you'll think I'm a sneak," he said, "but I wasn't a sneak. I went in to see you that Saturday, as usual, and when I went upstairs—you were with him in the library. I heard three words. God! they were enough! Then I came away, and went and drank, and drank, and drank—and all to the truth and honor of women."

He halted with his back to her, and there was silence in the room for many minutes.

When he turned, tears were upon her face, and she was drying them with her handkerchief.

"And all the trouble came from that," she said, with trembling lips. "Oh, what shall I do? What shall I say?"

"I don't know what you can do, or what you can say," said Jack, standing still and watching her sincere distress. "I'd feel pretty blamed mean if I were you, though. Understand, I don't question your good taste in choosing Holloway, nor your right to love him, nor his right to be there; but I fail to understand why you were to me just as you were, and I think it was unfair—out-and-out mean!"

"Mr. Denham," she said, almost painfully, "you've made a dreadful mistake." Then she stopped and moistened her lips. "I don't know just what words you overheard, but the dramatic instructor was there that afternoon drilling Mr. Holloway and myself for the parts which we took in the charity play last week; after he went out we went over one of the scenes alone. Perhaps you heard part of that. Mr. Holloway has never really made any love to me—perhaps he's never wanted to—perhaps I've never wanted him to."

Jack stared. His misconception was so strongly intrenched in the forefront of his brain that he could not possibly dislodge it at once.

Mrs. Rosscott continued to dry the tears that continued to rise; she seemed very much upset. In truth, she was terribly affected at finding herself to have been the cause (no matter how

innocently) of this latest tale of wrack and ruin.

"Do you mean to say," the young man said, at last, "that there was no truth in what I heard? Don't you ever expect to marry Mr. Holloway?"

"I never expect to marry anyone, but certainly not him," she replied, trying to regain her composure.

"Honest?"

"Assuredly."

He came suddenly nearer.

"Then what have you been thinking of me lately?" he asked.

"Very sad thoughts."

"Did you care?"

"Yes, I cared."

He stood beside her for a long time without speaking or moving. Then he pulled a chair forward, and sat down close in front of her.

"Don't cry," he said, almost daring to be tender. "There's nothing to cry about now, you know."

"I think there's plenty for me to cry about," she said, looking up through her long, wet lashes. "It is so terrible for me to be to blame. Papa swears he'll never forgive Bob, and your aunt——"

"Lord love you!" he exclaimed; "don't worry over me or my aunt. *I* don't. I don't mind anything, with Holloway staked in the ditch. I can get along well enough now."

He smiled—actually smiled—as he spoke.

"Oh, you mustn't speak so," she said, blushing; "indeed, you must not." And smiled, too, in spite of herself.

"Who's going to stop me?" he said. "You know that *you* can't; I'm miles the biggest."

She looked at him and tried to frown, but only blushed again instead.

"I'm glad to shake college," he went on, gayly; "it never was my favorite alley. I've made up my mind to go to work just as soon as I get these pastry strips off my head."

"Where?"

"I don't know. Anywhere. I don't care."

"But you'll come to my house when Bob comes next week, won't you?" she asked, suddenly. "I can see now why you wouldn't before, but—but it's different now. Isn't it?"

"Is it?" he said, asking the question chiefly of her pretty eyes.

"I think it is," she answered.

A door banged below.

"That's Burr!" he exclaimed, remembering suddenly the proximity of their chairs, and making haste to place himself farther away.

Burnett's step was heard on the stair.

"You never said anything to him, did you?" she questioned, quickly.

"Certainly not."

The next instant Burnett was in the room, and his sister was in his arms. (Astonishing how coolly he accepted the fact, too.)

"Mr. Denham is coming to me when you come, Bob," she said, when he released her. "I've persuaded him."

"How did you do it?" she was asked.

"By undertaking to reconcile him with his aunt, dear," she replied, blandly. "It's a contract that we've drawn up between us. You know that I was always rather good in the part of the peacemaker."

As she spoke, her eyes fell warningly on the manifest astonishment of Aunt Mary's nephew.

"You don't know what you're undertaking, Betty," said her brother. "You never had a chance to take Aunt Mary for better or for worse—I have."

"I'm not alarmed," said she, quietly. "I'm very courageous. I'm sure I'll succeed."

"Can the mender of ways—other people's ways—come in?" asked a voice at the door.

It was Mitchell's voice, and he came in without waiting for an invitation.

"Is it time that I went?" Mrs. Rosscott asked him, anxiously.

"Half an hour yet."

"Oh, I say, Jack," cried Burnett, "let's boil some water in the witch-hazel pan, and make a rarebit in the poultice pan, and have some tea here."

"Sure," said Jack, suddenly become his blithe and buoyant self again. "You just take off your hat and look the other way, and we'll have you a lunch in a jiffy."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A TRAP FOR AUNT MARY.

It was a rainy night in early June—not an early June such as our forefathers knew, when the air smelled of sweet thyme and roses and the rain water was good for the complexion, but such a June as we have learned to bear with equanimity—with furnace fires, and an occasional frost-bitten nose.

In Aunt Mary's part of the country the skies had been crying themselves sick for the last six weeks. The cranberry bog was a goner forever, it was feared, and a little house, very handy for sorting berries in, had had its foundations undermined, and disappeared beneath the face of the waters also.

Under such propitious circumstances, Aunt Mary sat by her own particular window and looked sternly and severely out across the garden and down the road. Lucinda sat by the other window, sewing. Lucinda hadn't changed materially, but her general appearance struck her mistress as more irritating than ever. Everything and everybody seemed to have become more and more irritating ever since Jack had been disinherited. Of course, it was right that he should have been disinherited, but Aunt Mary hadn't thought much beforehand as to what would happen afterward, and it was too aggravating to have him turn out so well just when she had lost all patience with him. And to have such a beautiful character all of a sudden—just as if education had been his temptation, and seclusion and illness were the guardian angels arrived just in time to save him from the evil effects thereof.

It hadn't occurred to Aunt Mary that people keep on living just the same even after they have been cut out of your will. And she never had counted on Jack's taking his bitter medicine in the spirit he was manifesting. For Jack, who had never written letters (except to Mr. Stebbins), had become a "ready letter-writer" now that he was shut up and ill (for he was ill at the house of his friends in the city), and his letters to her were not a bit like him, being sweetly pathetic. They came with touching frequency, and their polished periods fell upon Aunt Mary with the persistence of the proverbial drop of water.

It seemed that the poor boy had had the misfortune to contract measles, and in his weakened state the disease had nearly proved fatal. You can perhaps divine the effect of this statement on the grand-aunt, and the further effect of the words, "But never mind, Aunt Mary," with which he concluded the brief narration.

Aunt Mary had tried to snort and had sniffed instead; she had turned back to the first page, read the words, "All my head has been shaved, but I don't care about having any more fun, anyhow," and had let the letter fall in her lap. Every time that she had thought since of "our boy," her anger had fallen hotter upon whoever was handiest. Lucinda (who was used to it) lived under a figurative rain of cinders and thrived salamander-like in their midst; but Arethusa—who had come up for a week—found herself totally unable to stand the endless lava and boiling ashes, and fled back to the bosom of Mr. Arethusa the third morning after her arrival.

"I've got to go, I find," she had yelled, the night before her departure.

"I certainly wish you would," replied her aunt. "I'm a great believer in married women paying attention at home before they begin to pry into their neighbors' affairs. It's a good idea. Most generally—most always."

This was bitterly unkind, since Arethusa was in the habit of taking the long journey purely out of sense of duty and to keep Lucinda up to the mark; but grateful appreciation is rarely ever a salient point in the character of an autocrat.

"I'm glad she's gone," Aunt Mary told Lucinda, when they were left together once more. "She puts me beyond all patience. She chatters gibberish that I can't make out a word of for an hour at a time, and then, all of a sudden, she screams: 'Dinner's ready,' or something equally silly, in a voice like a carvin' knife. It's enough to drive a sane person stark, raving mad. It is."

Thus it was that the mistress and maid were sitting alone together, with the June rain falling without.

"There's Joshua with the mail," Aunt Mary said, presently. "He's tryin' to hold Billy an' hold the letters an' whistle, all at once. Why don't you go to him, Lucinda? Can't you hear a whistle that I can see? Or, if you can't hear the whistle, can't you hear *me?* Do you think whoever wrote those letters would be much pleased if they could see you so slow about gettin' them? Do——"

And just here the old lady, turning toward Lucinda, perceived that she had gone—Heaven knew when. She felt more vexed than ever at finding herself to be in the wrong, rubbed her nose impatiently, and waited in a temper to match the rubbing.

"My Lord! how slow she is!" she thought. "Well, if I don't die of old age first, I presume I'll get my letters some time. Maybe."

As a matter of fact, the door had blown shut behind Lucinda, and the latter personage was making her way, with well-hoisted skirts, around the house to the back door. She didn't pass the window where the Argus-eyed was looking forth, because that lady had strong opinions of those who let doors bang behind them without their own volition.

Five minutes later the maid did finally appear with one letter.

"I thought you was waitin' to bring to-morrow's mail at the same time," said Aunt Mary, icily.

Then she found that the letter was from Jack, and Lucinda was completely forgotten in the pleasure of opening and reading it.

DEAR AUNT MARY: It seems so strange that I'm just learning the pleasure of writing letters. I enjoy it more every day. When I see a pen I can hardly keep from feeling that I ought to write you directly. I think of you, then, because I'm thinking of you most always. It seems as if I never appreciated you before, Aunt Mary.

I want to tell you something that I know will make you happy. I've never made you very happy, Aunt Mary, but I'm going to begin now. I've got a place where I can earn my own living, and I'm going to work just as soon as I'm strong enough. I'm as tickled as a baby over it. I'll lay you any odds I get to be a richer man than the other John Watkins. I reckon money was bad for me, Aunt Mary, and I can see that you've done just the right thing to make a man of me. That isn't surprising, because you always did do just the right thing, Aunt Mary; it was I that always did just the wrong thing, but I'm straightened out now and this time it's forever—you just wait and see.

There's one thing bothers me some, and that is I don't get strong very fast. They want me to take a tonic, but I don't think a tonic would help me much. I feel so sort of blue and depressed, and perhaps that's natural, for Bob's away most of the time and I'm here all alone. It's a big house and sort of lonely, and sometimes I find myself imagining how it would seem to have some one from home in it with me, and I find myself almost crying—I do, for a fact, Aunt Mary.

Next week, Bob is going to be away more than usual, and I'm dreading it awfully; but, never mind, Aunt Mary, I don't want to make you blue, because honestly *I* don't think I'm going into a decline, even if the doctor does. And, after all, if I did sort of dwindle away it wouldn't matter much, for I'm not worth anything, and no one knows that as well as myself—except you, Aunt Mary.

I must stop because it's nine o'clock and time I was in bed. I've got some socks to wash out first, too; you see, I'm learning how to economize just as fast as I can. It's only two miles to my work, and I'm going to walk back and forth always—that'll be between fifty cents and a dollar saved each week. I'm figuring on how to live on my salary and never have a debt, and you'll be proud of me yet, Aunt Mary. If I don't die first.

Think of me all alone here next week. If I wasn't steadfast as a rock I believe I'd do something foolish just to get out of myself. But never mind, Aunt Mary, it's all right.

Your afft. nephew,
JOHN WATKINS, JR., DENHAM.

When Lucinda returned from drying her feet, Aunt Mary had her handkerchief in one hand and her spectacles in the other.

"Saints and sinners!" cried the maid, in a voice that grated with sympathy. "He ain't writ to say he's dead, is he?"

"No," said Aunt Mary; "but he isn't as well as he makes out. There's no deceivin' *me,* Lucinda!"

"Dear! dear!" cried the Trusty and True; "is that so? What's to be done? Do you want Joshua to run anywhere?"

Aunt Mary suddenly regained her composure.

"Run anywhere?" she asked, with her

usual bitter intonation. "If you ain't the greatest fool I ever was called upon to bed and board, Lucinda! Will you kindly explain to me how settin' Joshua trottin' is goin' to do any mortal good to my poor, dear boy away off there in that dreadful city?"

"He could telegraph to Miss Arethusa," Lucinda suggested.

"I don't want her," said Aunt Mary, with a positiveness that was final. "I don't want her—I don't want her, nor no livin' soul except my trunk; an' I want that just as quick as Joshua can haul it down out of the attic."

"You ain't thinkin' of goin' travelin'!" the maid cried, in consternation; "you can't never be thinkin' of *that?*"

"No," said her mistress, with fine irony; "I want the trunk to make a pie out of. Probably."

Lucinda was speechless.

"Lucinda," her mistress said, after a few seconds had faded away unimproved, "seems to me I mentioned wantin' Joshua to get down a trunk—seems to me I did."

The maid turned and left the room. She felt more or less dazed. She went to find Joshua, and she found him in the farther end of the rear woodhouse—John Watkins, like several of his ilk, having marked each forward step in the world by a back extension of his house.

Joshua was chopping wood; his ax was high in air.

"She's goin' to the city all alone!" Lucinda's voice suddenly proclaimed behind him.

The ax fell.

"Who says so?" its handler demanded, facing about.

"She says so."

Joshua picked up the ax and poised it afresh.

"She'll go, then," he said, calmly.

Lucinda marched around in front of him, and planted herself firmly among the chips.

"Joshua Whittlesey!"

"We can't help it," said Joshua, stolidly. "We're here to mind her. If she wants to go to New York, or to change her will, all we've got to do is to be simple witnesses."

"She wants her trunk out of the attic," said Lucinda.

"Then she'll get her trunk out of the attic. When does she want it?"

"She wants it now."

"Then she'll get it now," said Joshua. And from this it will readily be divined why he had been in Aunt Mary's employ for thirty years, and always been characterized by her as "a most sensible man."

Later that afternoon—the trunk having been brought down, and Aunt Mary's mind being quite made up—Joshua drove into town (amidst a wealth of mud spatters) and dispatched the answer to Jack's letter. Aunt Mary was urged to haste by several considerations, some well defined, and others not so much so. To Lucinda she imparted her terrible anxiety over the dear boy's health, but not even to herself did she admit her much more terrible anxiety lest Arethusa or Mary should suddenly appear and insist on accompanying her. She wanted to go alone, and she wanted to *bad.*

Jack telegraphed a response that night, and his aunt left by the Monday morning train. She had a six o'clock breakfast, and drove into town at a quarter of nine so as to be absolutely certain not to miss it. Joshua drove, with the trunk perched beside him. It was a small and unassuming trunk, but Aunt Mary was not one who believed in putting on airs just because she was rich.

She arrived on time, and only had an hour and three quarters to wait in the station. Toward the last she grew very nervous for fear something had happened to the train; but it came to time according to the waiting-room clock. Joshua put her aboard, and she soon had nothing left to worry over except the wonder as to whether Jack would be on hand to meet her or not.

Joshua drove back home alone, and put the horse up before going to where Lucinda waited for news.

"I wonder what *he's* up to?" she said, after all details as to the departure had been given her.

"Suthin', of course," was his answer.

"Do you s'pose he's really sick?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you s'pose she thinks he's really sick?"

"Mebbe."

Lucinda always had found Joshua aggravating, but she never had married him, so his idiosyncrasy was bearable.

"What do you think of her goin'?" she asked, turning to continue her ironing.

"I think she'll have a good time."

"At her age?"

"Havin' a good time ain't a matter o' age," said Joshua. "It's a matter o' bein' willin' to have a good time."

Lucinda screwed her face up mightily.

"If I was sure she'd be gone for a week," she said, "I'd go a-visitin' myself."

"She'll be gone a week," said Joshua; and the manner and matter of his speech were both those of a prophet.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AUNT MARY ENTRAPPED.

Aunt Mary's arrival in the city just coincided with the arrival of that day's five o'clock. Five o'clock in early June is very bright daylight, therefore she was rather bewildered when the train pulled up in the darkness and electricity of the station's confusion. The change from sunlight to smoke blinded her somewhat, and the view from the car window did not restore her equanimity. When the porter (to whom she had been discreetly recommended by Joshua) came for her bags, she felt woefully distressed and not at all like her usual self.

"Oh, do I have to get out?" she said. "I ain't been in this place for twenty-five years, and I was to be met."

The porter's grin hovered comfortingly over her head.

"You can stay here jus's long as you like, ma'am," he yelled, in the voice of a train dispatcher. "I'll send your friends in when they inquyahs."

Aunt Mary eyed him gratefully, and gave him the nickel which she had been carefully holding in her hand for the last hour.

Then she looked up, and saw Jack!

A perfectly splendid Jack in resplendent attire, handsome, beaming, with a big bouquet of violets in his hand!

"For you, Aunt Mary," he said, and dropped them in her lap, and hugged her fervently. She clung to him with a cling that forgot the immediate past. Oh! she was so glad to see him!

The porter approached.

"Has he taken good care of you, Aunt Mary?" Jack asked, as the man gathered up her things.

"Yes, indeed," Aunt Mary declared.

So Jack gave the porter a dollar.

Then they left the train.

"I was so worried," Aunt Mary said, as she went along the platform hanging on her nephew's arm. "I thought you'd met with an accident."

"I couldn't get on until the rest got off," he said, gazing down on her with a smile; "but I was on hand, all right. My, but it's good to think that you're here, Aunt Mary! Maybe you think that I don't appreciate your taking all this trouble for me, but I do, just the same."

Aunt Mary smiled all over. Everyone who passed them was smiling, too, and that added to the general joy of the atmosphere. Aunt Mary felt proud of Jack, and rejoiced as to herself. Her content with life in general was, for the moment, limitless.

"Why don't you stick those flowers in your belt, Aunt Mary?" her nephew asked, as they penetrated the worst of the human jungle, and the preservation of the violets appeared to be the main question of the day. "That's what the girls do."

His aunt looked vaguely down at herself. She had no belt to stick her violets in. She wore no belt. She wore a basque. A basque is a beltless something that you can't remember, but that females did, once upon a time, cover the upper half of their forms with. They buttoned down the front with ten to thirty buttons, and may be studied at leisure in any good collection of daguerreotypes. Ladies like Aunt Mary are apt to scorn such futilities as waning styles after they pass beyond a certain age, and for that reason there was no place for Jack's violets.

"Never mind," he said, cheerfully, having followed her dubiousness with his understanding. "Just hang on to them a minute longer, and we'll be out of all this."

His words came true, and they finally did emerge from the seething mass and find a carriage, the door of which happened to be standing mysteriously open. Within, upon the small seat, some omniscient hands had already deposited Aunt Mary's bags. It did not take long to stow Aunt Mary, face to her luggage, and she was barely established there before her trunk came, too; and, although the coachman looked so gorgeous, he was nevertheless obliging enough to allow it to couch humbly at his feet.

Then they rolled away.

Jack sat sideways and looked at his aunt, holding her hand. His eyes were unfeignedly happy, and his companion matched his eyes. Neither seemed to recollect that one was bitterly angry, and that the other was on the verge of melancholia. Instead, Jack declared, fervently:

"Aunt Mary, I've made up my mind to give you the time of your life!"

And Aunt Mary drew a sigh of belief in his words and anticipation of their fulfillment.

When they drew up in front of the house she looked out, and her face fell a trifle.

"High and narrow," she said.

"They all are," said Jack, opening the carriage door and jumping out to receive her.

The door at the top of the steps opened, and a man came down for the bags. In the hall above, a pretty maid waited with a welcoming smile.

Jack piloted his aunt upwards to the lovely room which had been vacated for her. The maid followed with tea and biscuits, and the man brought her luggage and ranged it unobtrusively in a corner. There was a lavish richness about everything which made Aunt Mary and her trunk appear as gray and insignificant as a pair of mice, by contrast; but she didn't feel it, and so she didn't mind it.

Jack kissed her tenderly; then, turning to the servant, he said:

"Janice, you see that you do all that money can buy for my aunt."

The maid courtesied.

Aunt Mary began at once to haul forth her keys.

"Why, Aunt Mary," Jack cried, wondering if her nose was deaf, too, or whether she didn't feel hungry, "don't you see your tea? Or don't you want any?"

Aunt Mary thumbed her trunk key.

"I want a nightgown," she said; "maybe I'll want something else later. Maybe."

"You're not going *to bed!*"

She drew herself up.

"I guess I can if I want to; I guess I can. There's the bed and here's me."

"Whatever are you saying? It isn't half-past six o'clock."

"I'm not *praying* about anything," said the old lady. "I don't pray about things. I do 'em when needful. And when I'm tired I go to bed."

The maid was making wildly significant gestures behind the back of her new mistress. Jack suddenly perceived the fact, and ceased to oppose his powerful relative.

"All right, Aunt Mary," he said, with sugary sweetness and lamblike submissiveness. "I thought we'd dine out together, but if you don't want to we needn't. And if you feel like it when you waken, we can."

He kissed her, and retired from the room.

"Did he say we're goin' out to dinner?" Aunt Mary asked, when she was left alone with the servant, who hurried to take her bonnet and shawl, and got her into juxtaposition with the tea tray as rapidly as possible.

"Yes, ma'am," the girl screamed, nodding.

"Has the cook left?"

"No" (shaking her head violently).

The old lady began to eat and drink and reflect, all at the same time.

"By the way, what's your name?" she asked the maid, suddenly. "Jack didn't tell me."

"Janice, ma'am."

"Granite?" said Aunt Mary. "What a funny idea to name you that! Did they call you for the tinware or for the rocks?"

"I don't know," shrieked Janice, who was busily occupied in unpacking the traveler's trunk.

Her mistress watched her with a critical eye at first, but it became a more or less sleepy eye as the warmth of the tea meandered slowly through its owner. There was a triangular battle within Aunt Mary's brain; she wanted to please Jack, she wanted to please herself, and she was almost dead with sleep.

"Do you think I ought to try and go out with my nephew to-night?" she asked Janice.

"If it was me, I should go," cried the maid.

"I never was called *slow* before," Aunt Mary said, bridling. "I'll thank you to remember your place, young woman."

Janice explained.

"Oh! I didn't hear plainly," said Aunt Mary. "I don't always. Well, go or not go, I've *got* to sleep first. I'm dreadfully sleepy, and I've always been a great believer in sleeping when you're sleepy."

The fact of the sleepiness was so evident that no attempt was made to gainsay it. Janice brought a down quilt from the closet and tucked her charge up luxuriously on the great bed. Five minutes later she was in dreamland.

Jack came in about seven and looked at her.

"She mustn't be disturbed," he said, thoughtfully. "If she wakes up before ten we'll go out then."

She awoke about nine, and when she opened her eyes the first thing that she saw was Janice, sitting near by.

"I feel real good," said Aunt Mary,

"I'm so glad," yelled Janice, and smiled, too.

The old lady sat up. A flood of metropolitan fever surged suddenly through her.

"I believe I could have gone out, after all," she said.

"Your nephew is waiting," the maid howled. "Shall I tell him you want to go, after all?"

"Is it late?" the old lady inquired.

"Oh, dear, no."

"Tell him I'll be down in five minutes."

"Can you change in that time?" Janice stopped short to shriek.

"What should I change for?" Aunt Mary demanded, in astonishment. "Ain't I all dressed now?"

Janice did not attempt to shriek any counter-advice, and while she was gone to find Jack her mistress brushed herself in some places, soaped herself in others and considered her toilet made. When Janice returned she caught up a loose lock of hair, and put the placket-hole of her skirt square in the middle of Aunt Mary's back, and dared go no further. There was an air even about the back of Jack's influential aunt which forbade too much liberty to those dealing with her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### AUNT MARY EN FETE.

Aunt Mary descended the stairs about half-past nine; she thought it was about a quarter of eight, but the difference between the hour that it was and the hour that she thought that it was will be all the same a hundred years from now.

Jack came out of the Louis XIV. drawing room when he heard her step in the hall. There was another young man with him.

"This is my friend Burnett, Aunt Mary," her nephew roared. "You must excuse his not bowing lower, but you know he broke his collar bone recently."

Aunt Mary shook hands warmly; she knew all about the ribs and the collar bone, because they had formed big items in the testimony which had momentarily and as momentously relegated Jack to the comradeship of the devil himself, in her eyes. However, she recalled them merely as facts now—not at all in a disagreeable way—and gave Burnett an extra squeeze of good-fellowship, as she said:

"You had a narrow escape, young man."

"I didn't have any escape at all," said

Burnett. "The escape went down at the back, and I had to jump from a cornice."

"Burnett is going out to dine with us, Aunt Mary," said Jack. "There's so little he can eat on account of his ribs that he's a good dinner guest for me."

Jack's aunt felt vaguely uncomfortable over this allusion to her grandnephew's circumstances, and coughed in slight embarrassment.

Burnett opened the door, and the carriage lamp shone below. They took her down and put her in, and the carriage rolled away.

It was that June when "Bedelia" covered nearly the whole of the political horizon; it was the date of June when West Point, Vassar, the Blue, the Red, the Black and Yellow and every other known device for getting rid of young and growing-up America are all cast loose at once on our fair land. The streets were a scene of glorious confusion, and but for Aunt Mary no considerations could have kept Burnett's collar bone and Jack's melancholia cooped up in a closed carriage. As it was, they were both fidgeting like two youthful Uncle Sams in a European railway coupé, when the latter suddenly exclaimed:

"Here we are!"

Aunt Mary regarded the awning and carpet and general glitter with a more or less appalled gaze.

"Looks like——" she began; and was interrupted by a voice at her side:

"Hello, Jack!"

"Hello, Clover!"

She turned and saw him of the pale mustache whom we once met in Mrs. Rosscott's drawing room.

Jack shook hands warmly, then he turned to his relative.

"Aunt Mary, this is my friend Clover; he's often heard me speak of you."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Rover," said Aunt Mary, cordially.

Her nephew bent above her ear trumpet.

"Clover!" he howled, with all the strength he owned.

"I heard before," said Aunt Mary, somewhat coldly.

"Come on and dine with us, Clover," said Jack; "that'll just make four." (By the way, isn't it odd how many people ask their friends to dinner for the simple reason that, arithmetically considered, each counts as one!)

"All right, I will," said Clover, in his languid drawl.

Aunt Mary saw his lips move.

"It's no use my deceivin' you as to my bein' a little hard of hearin'," she said to him, "because you can see my ear trumpet; so I'll trouble you to say that last over again."

"All right, I will," Clover wailed, good-humoredly.

*"What?"* asked Aunt Mary. "I didn't——"

Jack cut her short by leading the party inside.

The scene within was as gorgeous with golden stucco as the dining room of a German liner. Aunt Mary was so overcome that she traversed half the room before she became aware of the mighty attention which she and her three young escorts were attracting. In truth, it is not every day that three good-looking young men take a tiny old lady, a bunch of violets and an ear trumpet out to dine at ten o'clock.

"Everyone's lookin'," she said to Jack.

"It's your back, Aunt Mary," he replied, in a voice that shook some loose golden flakes from the ceiling. "I tell you, not many women of your age have a back like yours, and don't you forget it."

The compliment pleased Aunt Mary, because she had been all her life considered round-shouldered.

They went to a table, and were barely seated when another man came up.

"Hello, Jack!"

"Hello, Mitchell!"

It was he of the Scotch ancestry. Jack sprang up and greeted him with warmth, then he turned to Aunt Mary.

"Aunt Mary," he screamed, "this is my friend"— he paused, put on all steam and plowed right through—"Herbert Kendrick Mitchell."

"I didn't catch that at all," said Aunt Mary, calmly, "but I'm just as glad to meet the gentleman."

"You'd better dine with us, Mitchell," said Jack; "that'll just make five."

"It won't make but three for me," said Mitchell. "I haven't had but two dinners before to-night."

Clover smiled because he heard, and Aunt Mary smiled because she didn't.

Then the waiter laid another plate for Mitchell, and brought oyster cocktails for everyone. Aunt Mary eyed hers with early curiosity and later suspicion; and then she smelled of it carefully.

"I don't believe it's a good oyster," she said.

"Yes, it is," said Mitchell, reassuringly. He had been seated by her, and his voice, when he turned it upon her, was pitched like a clarinet. The blind would surely have seen as well as the deaf have heard had there been any candidates for miracles in his immediate vicinity.

The reassured took another whiff.

"You can have mine," she said, directly afterwards; and there was an air of decision about her speech which brooked no opposition. Yet Mitchell persisted.

"Oh, no," he yelled; "you must learn how. Just throw your head back and take it quick—after the fashion that they eat raw eggs, don't you know?"

"But she can't," said Clover. "There's too much, particularly as she isn't used to drinking. I'll tell you, Miss Watkins," he cried, hoisting his own voice to the masthead, "you eat the oysters, and leave the cocktail."

Aunt Mary thought some of obeying; she fished out one oyster, wiped it carefully with a bit of bread, regarded it with a more than dubious countenance, and then suddenly decided not to.

"I'd rather be at home when I try experiments," she said, decidedly; and the waiter carried off her cocktail and gave her food that was good beyond question thereafter.

The dinner went with zest. It was an enlivening party that consumed it, and what they consumed with it enlivened them still more. The gentlemen soon reached the point where they could laugh over jokes they could not understand, and its one lady member became equally merry over wit that she did not hear.

She could see, though, and when Clover refilled her glass she asked him where he got the scar upon his wrist.

"Is it vaccination?" she asked. "Or did you try to tattoo yourself?"

"I played lacrosse in Canada," he explained loudly.

"Don't pity him," Mitchell cried; "pity me. See where I had my eyebrow cut open Thanksgiving."

"I'll tell you what, Aunt Mary," Jack howled, softly, "it would be a sin for you to leave this famous battlefield without a few honorable scars! We must take you out in a bubble!"

"In mine!" cried Clover. "To-morrow!"

"All right," said Jack; "at four o'clock."

"She must have goggles," cried Mitchell. "She must have goggles and be all fixed up, and when you have got her the goggles and she has been all fixed up, I ask, as a last boon, that I may go along, just so as to see everyone who sees her."

"We'll all go," Clover explained. "I'll chuff her myself, and then there'll be room for everyone."

"To the auto and to to-morrow!" cried Burnett, hastily pouring out a fresh toast, which even Aunt Mary drank with zest.

And then, because the dinner had by this time dwindled down to coffee grounds and cheese crumbs, somebody suggested going. Aunt Mary suggested home, but she was overruled, and they all went elsewhere. She never could recollect where she went or what she saw; but, as everyone else has been and seen over and over again, I won't fuss with detailing it.

The visitor from the country was brought home in a hack along in the small hours of the morning, and Janice received her, looking somewhat nervous.

"This is pretty late," she ventured to remind the bearers; but, as they didn't seem to think so, and as she was a maiden wise beyond her years, she spoke no further word, but went to work and undressed the aged reveler, got her com-

fortably established in bed, and then left her to sleep it out, an occupation which occupied the weary one fully until two that afternoon.

When she did at last open her eyes it was several minutes before she knew where she was. Her brain seemed dazed, her intellect more than clouded. It is a state of mind to which those who habitually go about in hansoms at the hour of dawn are well accustomed, but to Aunt Mary it was painfully new. She struggled to remember, and felt helplessly inadequate to the task. Janice finally came in with a glass of something that foamed and fizzed, and the victim of unwonted dissipations drank that and came to her senses again. Then she recollected.

"My! but I had a good time last night!" she said, putting her hand to her head. "What time is it now, anyhow?"

"Breakfast time," cried the handmaiden. "You'll have just long enough to eat and dress leisurely before you go out."

"Oh!" said Aunt Mary, blankly; "where'm I goin? Do you know?"

"Mr. Denham told me that you had promised to attend an automobile party at four."

"Oh, yes," said Aunt Mary, hastily. "I guess I remember. I guess I do. I saw Jack wanted to go, so I said I'd go, too. I'm a great believer in lettin' the young enjoy themselves."

"Mr. Mitchell called and left these flowers with his card," Janice continued, opening a huge box of roses; "and a man brought a package. Shall I open it?"

Aunt Mary's wrinkles fairly radiated.

"Well, did I ever!" she exclaimed. "Yes; open it."

Janice proceeded to obey, and the package was found to contain an automobile wrap, a pair of goggles and a note from Clover.

"My gracious me!" cried Aunt Mary. "An' me livin' up there in the country all my life, with *plenty* of money to have come to town any day!"

The sense of her words, although perhaps vague, was plain enough to the maid.

"Mr. Denham sent the violets," she said, pointing to a great bowl of lilac and white blossoms.

Just then the doorbell rang, and it was a ten-pound box of candy from Burnett.

Aunt Mary collapsed among her pillows.

"I *never* did!" she murmured, feebly.

When she had dressed and had breakfast, Jack knocked at the door.

"Well, Aunt Mary," he roared, when he was let in, "if you don't look fine! You're the freshest of the bunch to-day, sure. You'll be ready for another night to-night, and you've only to say where, you know."

"Granite did my *hair*," said his aunt; "you must praise her, not me."

"And you've got your goggles all ready, too," he continued. "Who sent 'em?"

"Oh, I shan't wiggle," said Aunt Mary; "although I can't see how it could hurt if I did."

"Come on and let's dress her up," said Jack to the maid, in a low tone. "Glory! what fun!"

Thereupon they went to work and rigged the old lady out. She was certainly a holy show, for she stood by her own bonnet, and that failed to jibe with the goggles.

Burnett was summoned in to view the proceedings, but just as he caught the first glimpse he was taken with a fearful cramp in his broken ribs, and was forced to beat the hastiest sort of a retreat.

"I hope he'll get over it, and be able to go out with us," said Aunt Mary, anxiously.

"I guess he'll recover," Jack yelled, cheerfully. "Oh, there's Clover!"

A sort of dull, ponderous panting sounded in the street without, and let all the neighbors know that "The Threshing Machine" (as Clover had christened his elephantine toy) was waiting for some one.

Its owner came in for a stirrup cup; Mitchell was with him. Both were togged out as if entered for the annual Paris-Bordeaux.

Burnett brought out the cut-glass jugs.

"Ye gods and little fishes! *Sapristi! Sacré bleu!*" he said to his friends. "Just you wait till you see our Aunt Mary."

"Has she got 'em all on?" Clover asked.

"Has she got 'em all on!" said Burnett. "She has got 'em all on; and how Jack held his own in the room with her I cannot understand. I took one look, and if mine had been a surgical case of stitches the last thread would have bust that instant. I don't believe I dare go out with you. This is a life-and-death game to Jack, and I won't risk smashing his future by not being able to keep sober in the face of Aunt Mary."

"Oh, come on," Clover urged, in his wiry voice. "You needn't look at her; or, if you do look at her, you can look the other way right afterwards, you know."

"I'll sit next to her," Mitchell explained. "As a sitter by Aunt Mary's side I shone last night; and where man has sat once, the same man can surely sit again."

Burnett hesitated, and just then voices were heard in the hall. Jack and Janice were conveying Aunt Mary below.

Mitchell went out in the hall.

"Well, Miss Watkins," he said, in a tone such as one would use to call down Santos-Dumont, "I'm mighty glad to see you looking so well."

Aunt Mary turned the goggles full upon him.

"A present from Mr. Clover," she said, smiling.

"I never knew him to take so much trouble for any lady before," said Mitchell; and, as she arrived just then at the foot of the staircase, he pressed her proffered hand warmly and led her forthwith in upon the two men in the library.

She looked exactly like a living edition of one of the bug pictures, and Clover had to think and swallow fast and hard to keep from being overcome. But he was true blue, and came out right side up. Aunt Mary was acclaimed on all sides, and escorted to the "bubble."

Burnett couldn't resist going, too, at the last moment; but, as his ribs were really tender yet, he sat in front with Clover. Jack and Mitchell sat behind, and deftly inserted the honored guest between them.

"It's an even thing as to which is the ear-trumpet side," Mitchell said, as they all stood about preparatory to climbing in. "Of course, whoever is that side don't need to holler quite so loud; but, then, to balance, he may get his one and only pair of front teeth knocked out any minute."

"I'll take that side," said Jack. "I'm used to fighting under the inspiration of the trumpet."

And then they got in and were off—a merry load, indeed.

"Dear me, but it's a-goin'!" Aunt Mary exclaimed, as the thing began to whiz and she felt suddenly impelled to clutch wildly at her flanking escorts. "Suppose we met a dog."

"We'd leave a floor mat," shrieked Mitchell. "Oh, but isn't this great—greater—greatest?"

"Time of your life, Aunt Mary!" Jack howled, as they went over a boarded spot in the pavement, and the old lady nearly went over the back in consequence. "You're in for the time of your life!"

"How do you like it?" yelled Clover, throwing a glance over his shoulder.

Aunt Mary started to answer, but they came to four car tracks one after another, and the successive shocks rendered her speechless.

"Where are we going?" Burnett asked.

"No-where," said Clover. "Just waking up the machine." And he turned on another million volts as he spoke.

"Oh, my bonnet!" cried poor Aunt Mary, and that bit of her adornment was in the street and had been run over four times before they could slow up, turn around, and get back to the scene of its out-put.

It speaks volumes for the permeating atmosphere of "having the time of your life" that its owner laughed when the wreck was shown her.

"I don't care a bit," she said. "I can go down to Delmonico's an' get me another to-morrow mornin', easy."

"What a trump you are, Aunt Mary!"

said Jack, admiringly. "Here, Burnett, fish her out that extra cap from the cane rack; there's always one in the bottom. There, now, you won't take cold, Aunt Mary."

The cap, with its fore-piece, was the crowning glory of Aunt Mary's get-up. The brain measurements of he who had bought the cap being to its present wearer's as five is to three, the effect of its proportions, in addition to the goggles and the ear trumpet, was such as to have overawed a survivor of Medusa's stare.

"Oh, I say," said Mitchell, "it's a sin to keep as good a joke as this in the family. We must drive her around town until the night falls down or the battery burns out."

Clover thought so, too, with the result that they speeded through tranquil neighborhoods and churned leisurely where the masses seethed until countless thousands were wondering what under the sun those four young fellows had in the back of their car.

The sad part about all good sport is that it has to end sooner or later; and about six o'clock Clover's party began to be aware that, if refreshment was not taken, their end was surely close at hand. They therefore called a brief halt somewhere to get what is technically known as a "sandwich," and the results were thoroughly satisfactory to everyone but Aunt Mary. She took only one bite of her sandwich, and then she opened it with an abruptness which merged into disgust when it proved to be full of fish eggs.

"Why didn't you tell me what it was made of?" she asked, in annoyance. "I feel just as if I'd swallowed a marsh—a green one!"

"That's a shame!" said Clover, indignantly. "I'll get you something that will clean that taste out of your mouth double quick. Here!" he called to a waiter, and then he gave the man certain careful directions.

The latter nodded wisely, and a few minutes later brought in a glass thimble containing a layer cocktail in three different colors.

"Drink it quick," Clover directed, and his confiding guest drank it quick, and became the three different colors quicker yet.

"What's the matter?" Jack asked, anxiously.

But Aunt Mary was speechless.

"He mixed it wrong," said Burnett. "What she ought to have got first she got last, that's all. The cocktail's upside down inside of her, and the effect of it is upside down on the outside of her."

"Feel any better now, Aunt Mary?" Jack yelled.

"I can't seem to keep the purple swallowed," said the poor old lady. "I want to go home."

"I would strongly recommend your obeying her wishes," said Mitchell. "There's a time for all things, and, in my opinion, she's had about all the queer tastes that she can absorb for to-day."

So they all piled in again and rushed Aunt Mary bedward as rapidly as was possible considering the hour and the policemen.

Janice received her mistress with the tender welcome that every prodigal may count on. And Aunt Mary slept long and dreamlessly again.

. . . . . .

That was a week to be remembered!

Aunt Mary did have "the time of her life," for a fact, and no mistake about it. Every minute that she was out of bed she was "in it" for all that she was worth, and but for Janice's continual warnings they would have worked her harder yet. Burnett gave a theater party, Clover gave a picnic, Mitchell took her to Coney Island, Jack dined her and wined her whenever some one else wasn't doing the same thing.

Aunt Mary grew unspeakably gay—Aunt Mary grew unspeakably gayer—Aunt Mary became the gayest of all.

She began her day in the middle of the afternoon, and reveled in its splendor until the more or less lurid termination dawned some time the following morning. Her one regret was that the end must be when, upon the following Monday, Jack began work, and "the family" were to return to their home. It was only natural that at seventy years of age she should rebel over relinquish-

ing a treasure just discovered; and, although her nephew promised a repetition of her joys in the fall to come, Aunt Mary was become a victim to the excitement germ, and did not want to relax her muscles *ever* again.

She had accomplished wonders in her one short week, and became a living testimonial to the truth of the statement that the only place where life is worth living is the city where it centers. Her days and nights were passed in the lurid reflections of pleasure's most brilliant glow; and under the circumstances it was little short of maddening to think of being relegated to the company of Lucinda for the whole summer. Lucinda! Will *you* only think of it! Lucinda!

However, she hadn't much time to think about that or anything else. Every hour that she wasn't sleeping she was being "rushed to the limit" in every sense of the word. Some idea of the wildness of her rush may be gathered from the fact that she lost her ear trumpet three times in as many days, and was not conscious of the void until the return of the treasure upon the following day.

The crowning glory was the night before that scheduled for her homeward voyaging. Her little band of devoted slaves set out to make that night an epoch to remember forever. And they certainly succeeded. It began with a dinner that lapsed into a visit to a vaudeville later. Aunt Mary was far past the stage where one theater is regarded as enough for one night, so from the vaudeville they went to another, and from there to a roof garden. That roof garden led to a final and triumphant termination of the closing scene by the whole party's taking cabs and driving gayly about until they all discovered that their gayety had merged into so profound a sleepiness that the vote to go home was carried unanimously at—never mind what o'clock.

They went home, and the next day Aunt Mary had to face the ordeal of turning her face away from all the joys which had so suddenly altered the hues of life for her. She was gloomy and cheerful by turns. While Janice was packing her trunk she made her a present of twenty-five dollars. The maid rather demurred.

"Take it," said Aunt Mary, imperiously; "you're well worth it."

Janice took it and thanked her.

"I've had a nice time," said the old lady, thoughtfully. "I guess those young men have enjoyed it, too. I rather think my bein' here has given them a chance to go a good many places where they'd never have thought of goin' alone by themselves."

They were all there to see her off—Mitchell, and Clover, and Burnett—bearing flowers, magazines and candy galore. Only the train whistle could drown the farewells which they poured into her ear trumpet, and when they could hover in her drawing room no longer, they stood outside the window as long as the window was there to stand outside of.

"By grab!" said Burnett, when the train was gone and they turned to quit the platform, "I think she ought to leave us all fortunes. I never was so completely done up in all my life."

"My throat's blistered," said Clover, feebly. "I'm going to stand on my head and gargle with salve until my throat's healed."

"I shall never shine on the team again," said Mitchell. "I shall hire out for bleacher work. He who has successfully conversed with Aunt Mary need not fear to attack a Wagner opera single-handed."

Jack did not say anything. His heart was athirst for Mrs. Rosscott.

She was back in her own library the next night, and he rested from his first day's labor there in one of the great lounging chairs.

She was prettier, and her eyes were sweeter and brighter than ever.

"It will all come out right, I'm sure," she said, earnestly. "And I am so glad—so glad—that the chance was given me to help right the wrong that I was the cause of."

He came beside her, bowed himself, and kissed her hand.

She looked at him, very kindly indeed.

"And now the fun's all over, and the work begins," she said, softly.

"I know it," he said.

"Listen," she said, earnestly. "I had a good and sufficient reason for helping you out with your Aunt Mary; but——" She hesitated.

"But?" he urged.

"But I've no reason at all for helping your Aunt Mary out with you, unless you prove worthy of her, and——"

"And?"

She looked at him, and shook her head slightly.

"I won't say 'and of me,'" she said, finally.

"Why not?" he asked. "Do say it," he pleaded.

"No," she said; "I don't mean it, and so I won't say it. I'll only tell you that I can promise nothing as things are, and that unless you go at life from now on with a tremendous energy I never *shall* even dream of a possible promising."

He rose to his feet and towered above her, tall and straight and handsome, and very grave.

"All right," he said, simply. "I'll remember."

## CHAPTER XV.

### AUNT MARY'S RETURN.

Joshua was at the station to meet his mistress, and Lucinda, full to the brim with curiosity, sat on the back seat of the carryall.

Aunt Mary quitted the train with a dignity which was sufficiently overpowering to counteract the effect of her bonnet's being somewhat awry. She greeted Lucinda with a chill perfunctoriness that was indescribable, and her glance glided completely over Joshua and ran down the reins which he held.

"I'm glad to see you looking so well," Lucinda screamed, when all were in and they were off.

Aunt Mary looked a trifle indignant, but did not avert her gaze from the hindquarters of the horse.

"I thought it was more like heaven myself," she said, coldly. "Not that your opinion matters any to me, Lucinda."

Then she leaned forward and poked the driver.

"Joshua!" she said.

Joshua jumped in his seat at the asperity of her tone.

"What is it?"

"Jus' 's soon as we get home I want you to take the saw—that little, sharp one, you know—and dock Billy's tail. Cut it off as close as you can; do you hear?"

"I hear," said Joshua, much startled.

"Did you have a good time?" Lucinda had the temerity to ask, after a minute.

"I guess I could if I tried?" the old lady replied; "but I'm too tired to try now."

"How did you leave Mr. Jack?"

"I couldn't stay forever, could I?" asked the traveler, impatiently. "I thought that a week was long enough for the first time, anyhow."

Lucinda subsided, and the rest of the drive was taken in silence. Aunt Mary made short work of getting to bed, and she slept the luxurious and dreamless sleep of the unjust until late that afternoon. Then she awoke, and awoke to a most vigorous attitude toward life in general and toward Lucinda in particular. The attitude was not in any degree altered by the unexpected arrival of Arethusa that evening. Strange tales had reached Arethusa's ears, and she had flown on the wings of steam and coal dust to see what under the sun it all meant. Her aunt appeared in no wise rejoiced to see her, and the glare which she directed over the edge of the counterpane bore testimony to the truth of my statement.

"Whatever did you come for?" she demanded, inhospitably. "Lucinda didn't send for you, did she?"

Arethusa screamed the best face that she could onto her visit. Aunt Mary listened with an inattention that was anything but flattering.

"Well, 's long as you're here you may as well make yourself useful," she said, when she saw that her niece's lips

had ceased to move. "I want you to go to Boston the very first thing to-morrow morning an' buy me some cotton."

Arethusa stared blankly.

"Well," said her aunt, "if you can't hear, take my trumpet an' I'll say it over again."

"What kind of cotton?" Arethusa yelled.

"Not *stockings,*" said Aunt Mary; "Cotton! Cotton! C-O-T-T-O-N! It beats the Dutch how deaf everyone is gettin', an' if I had your ears in particular, Arethusa, I'd certainly get a carpenter to get at 'em with a bit-stalk. Jus' 's if you didn't know 's well as I do how many stockings I've got already! I should think you'd quit bein' so heedless, an' use your common sense, anyhow. I've found common sense a very handy thing in talkin' always. Always."

Arethusa launched herself full tilt into the ear trumpet.

"What — kind — of — cotton?" she asked, in that key of voice which makes the crowd pause in a panic.

Aunt Mary looked disgusted.

"The Boston kind," she said, nipping her lips.

Arethusa took a double hitch on her larnyx, and tried again.

"Do you mean thread?"

Aunt Mary's disgust deepened visibly.

"If I meant silk, I guess I wouldn't say cotton. I might just happen to say silk. I've been in the habit of sayin' silk when I meant silk, and cotton when I meant cotton, for quite a number of years, and I might not have changed to-day—I might just happen to not of. I might not of—maybe."

Arethusa withered under this bitter irony.

"How many spools do you want?" she asked, in a meek but piercing howl.

"I don't care," said Aunt Mary, loftily. "I don't care how many—or what color—or what number. I just want some Boston cotton, and I want to see you settin' out to get it pretty promptly to-morrow morning."

"But if you only want some cotton," Arethusa yelled, with a force which sent crimson waves all over her, "why can't I get it in the village?"

Aunt Mary shot one look at her niece, and the latter felt the concussion.

"Because I want you to get it in Boston," said she, with acerbity unequaled. "When I say a thing, I mean it pretty generally. Quite often—most always. I want that cotton, and it's to be bought in Boston. There's a train goes in at seven-forty-five, and if you don't favor the idea of ridin' on it you can take the express that goes by at six-five."

Arethusa carried the discussion no further. She took the seven-forty-five train the next morning, and was well on her way when Aunt Mary's bell summoned Lucinda to open her blinds.

While Lucinda was leaning far out and attempting to cause said blinds to catch on the hooks, which habitually held them back against the side of the house, her mistress addressed her with a suddenness which showed that again she had awakened with her wits surprisingly well in hand.

"Where's Joshua? What's he doin'? Answer this minnit!"

Lucinda drew herself in through the open window with an alacrity remarkable for one of her years.

"He's mowin'," she said, raspingly.

"Sewin'!" said Aunt Mary. "What's he sewin'? Where's he sewin'? Have you stopped doin' his darnin'?"

Lucinda gathered breath by compressing both sides with her hands, and then replied, directing her voice right into the ear trumpet:

"He's mowin' the back lawn."

Aunt Mary winced.

"My Heaven, Lucinda!" she exclaimed, sharply. "I wish't there was a school to teach outsiders the use of an ear trumpet. They can't seem to hit the medium between either mumblin' or splittin' one's ear drums."

Lucinda was too out of breath from her effort to attempt any audible penitence. Her mistress continued:

"Well, you go find him, wherever he is, and tell him to harness up the buggy and go and get me Mr. Stebbins as quick as ever he can. And hurry!"

Lucinda exited with a promptitude that fulfilled all that her lady's heart could wish. She found Joshua whetting his scythe.

"She wants Mr. Stebbins right off."

"Then she'll get Mr. Stebbins right off," said Joshua. And he headed immediately for the barn.

"I guess she wants to change her will."

"Then she'll change her will," said Joshua. And as his gait was a much quicker one than Lucinda's, and he saw no occasion to alter it ever, the conversation between them dwindled into space then and there.

Mr. Stebbins' visit resulted in such-wise that Jack's disinheriting became the star event of his life. With her brain still enhaloed by the joys just past, Aunt Mary drew up a new will in which her father's namesake reigned supreme.

"I made a big mistake about the life that boy was leadin'," she said to Mr. Stebbins, in the course of their conversation. "He took me everywhere that he was in the habit of goin', an' so far from its bein' wicked, I never enjoyed myself so much in my life. There ain't no harm in havin' fun, an' it does cost a lot of money. I can understand it all now, and, as I'm a great believer in settin' wrong right whenever you can, I want Jack put right in my will right off. I want——" And then were unfolded the glorious possibilities of the future for her youngest, petted nephew.

When all was finished, and Joshua and Lucinda had been called in and had duly affixed their signatures to the momentous document, the buggy was brought to the door again, and Mr. Stebbins replaced where they had taken him from.

Arethusa returned late in the afternoon, very warm, very wilted. Aunt Mary looked over the cotton purchase, and deigned to approve.

"But, my heavens, Arethusa," she exclaimed immediately afterwards, "if you had any idea how dirty and dusty and altogether awful you do look, you wouldn't be able to get to soap and water fast enough."

Upon which mild hint, her niece went away to prepare for tea.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### JACK'S JOY.

About the first of July, Burnett's father suddenly asked why in the devil Bob never came home any more. This action on the part of the head of the house being tantamount to the completest possible forgiveness and obliviousness of the past, Burnett's mother (of whom the inquiry had been made) wept tears of joy, and wrote to the youngest of her flock to return to the ancestral fold just as soon as he could. He came that Saturday, and the Saturday following there was a house party, and Mrs. Rosscott managed to have Jack included in the list of guests. She was staying under the paternal slate tiles now (having given up the town house July first), and the young man was radiant within and without at the unexpected pleasure of spending two whole evenings and the day between in her company. He had worked tremendously hard the first month of daily laboring, and felt he deserved a reward. Be it said for Jack that the reward of which Aunt Mary had the bestowing counted for very little for him except in its relation to the far future. The real goal which he was striving toward—the real laurels that he craved——

Ah! they lay in another direction.

Middle July is a lovely time to get off among the trees and grass, and lie around in white flannels or white muslins, just as the case may be. It was too warm to do much else than that, and Heaven knows that Jack desired nothing better. Holloway was there spending a week, and Maude Lorne was there spending the summer, and countless others were there spending Saturday and Sunday; but Jack did not trouble himself much as to any of them—as long as his goddess smiled upon him.

It was curious about his goddess. She seemed to grow more beautiful every time that he saw her. Perhaps it was her native air that gave her that charming flush; perhaps it was the joy of being at home again; perhaps it was—— No, he didn't dare hope that. Not yet. Not even with all that she had done for

him fresh in his memory. The humility of true love was so heavy on his heart that his very dreams were dulled with hopelessness—the majority of them seeming too vividly dyed in Paradise hues to ever possibly be realized in daily life. But still he was very, very happy to be there with her—beside her—and to hear her voice and look into her eyes whenever the troublesome "other people" would leave them alone together. And she did seem happy, too—and so rejoiced that the tide of Aunt Mary's wrath had been successfully turned. And so rejoiced that he was at work, even in the face of her hopes as to his college career. And so rejoiced to take up the gay, careless thread of their mutual pleasure again.

"You're such a baby!" she told him the morning after his arrival (an ideal Sabbath morning), when they were setting forth at a most leisurely gait upon the smoothest and shadiest of forest paths. "You're such a baby! Now, if you ask me why, I shall so dearly love to tell you."

"Do tell me," he asked, obediently. "I'm wild to know."

"That's a dear boy!" she laughed. "If you wanted to know as badly as that, I'd have to tell you anyhow, whether I wanted to or not. But I really want you to know. It's because I'm so much the oldest."

"Oh!" said Jack, much disappointed. "Is that why?"

"Besides, you're so sort of unsophisticated."

"I am, am I?" he asked, grimly.

"Yes," she said, nodding; "at least, you impress me so."

"I'm glad of that," he said, after a little pause.

She looked up quickly.

"Truly?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Oh," she laughed, "if you say that, then I know that you are less unsophisticated than I thought you were."

"Why so?" he asked, surprised.

"Don't you know that meek, mild men always try to insinuate that they are regular fire eaters, and vice versa? There was once a man who was kissing me, and he drew my hands up around his neck in such a clever, gentle way that I couldn't help saying: 'Oh, how many women you must have kissed!' He just smiled and said: 'Not so many as you might imagine.' But, oh! he had. I found that out afterwards."

"What did you do then?" he asked, frowning. "Cut him?"

"No; I married him. Why, of course I was going to marry him when he kissed me, or I wouldn't have let him. What are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking of you," he said. "It's a horrible habit I've fallen into. But, never mind—keep on talking."

"I don't remember what I was saying," she said. "Oh, yes, I do, too. About men—about good and bad men. Now, even if I didn't know how much trouble you'd made in the world, I'd divine it all the instant that you were willing to admit being unsophisticated. People always crave to be the opposite of what they are; the drug shops couldn't sell any peroxide of hydrogen if that wasn't so."

He laughed.

"Now, look at me," she continued. "Oh, I didn't mean really—I meant figuratively; but never mind. Now, I'm nothing but a bubble and a toy, and I ache to be considered a philosopher. Don't you remember my telling you what a philosopher I was, the very first conversation that we ever had together? I do try so hard to delude myself into thinking I am one, that some days I'm almost sure that I really am one. Last night, for instance, I was thinking how nice it would be for my Cousin Maude to marry you."

"Ye gods!" cried Jack.

"She's so very rich," Mrs. Rosscott pursued, calmly; "and you know the law of heredity is an established scientific fact now, so you could feel quite safe as to her nose skipping the next generation."

Jack was audibly amused.

"It's not anything to laugh over," his companion continued, gravely. "It's something to ponder and pray over. If I was Maude I should be on my knees about it most of the time."

"Nothing can help her now," said Jack. "Her parents have been and gone and done it, as far as she's concerned, forever. Prayer won't change her nose, although age may broaden it yet more."

"Don't you believe that nothing can help her now? A good-looking husband could help her lots. I've seen homelier girls than she go just *everywhere*—on account of their husbands, you know. That was where my philosophy came in."

"I'd quite forgotten your philosophy." He laughed as he spoke. "I must apologize. Please tell me more about it."

She laughed, too.

"I'm going to. You see, I lay there, looking out at the moon, and thinking how nice it would be for Maude to marry you."

"Did you think of me at all?" he interposed.

"How you interrupt!" she declared, in exasperation. "You never let me finish."

"I am dumb."

"Well, I thought how nice it would be for Maude to marry you. You'd have a baron for a papa-in-law, and an heiress to balance Aunt Mary with. If you went into consumption and had to retreat to Arizona for a term of years, the climate could not ruin her complexion as it would m—most people's. And she's *so* ready to have you that it's almost pathetic. It seemed such a nice arrangement all around, and then I began to wonder if I was philosopher enough to enjoy being matron-of-honor to Maude."

"At the wedding I could have kissed you!" he exclaimed, and suddenly subsided at the look with which she withered his boldness.

"And I wasn't altogether sure. But it was *such* a nice plan, and I turned it over and over in my mind; and then, suddenly, it occurred to me that nothing on the face of the earth would ever persuade you to marry Maude. And I saw my card castle go smashing down, and *then* I saw that I really am a philosopher, after all, for—for I didn't mind a bit!"

Jack threw his head back and roared.

"Oh," he said, after a minute, "you are *so* refreshing. You ruffle me up just to give me the joy of smoothing down, don't you?"

"I do what I can to amuse you," she said, demurely. "You are my father's guest and my brother's friend, and so I ought to—oughtn't I?"

They had come to a delightful little nook where the very trees sighed gently: "Sit down," and there seemed to be no adequate reason for refusing the invitation. Mrs. Rosscott did not consult her companion, but sank abruptly upon the grass. He threw himself down beside her. And the hush and the song of midsummer was all about them.

Presently he took her hand up out of the grass where its fingers were hiding themselves, and kissed it. She looked at him reprovingly.

"Such a little one!" he said.

"I call it a pretty big one," she answered.

"I meant the hand—not the kiss," he said, smiling.

"You really *are* sophisticated," she told him. "Only fancy if you had reversed those nouns!"

"I know," he said; "but I've kissed hands before. You see, I'm more talented than you think."

"Don't be silly," she said, smiling.

"Why do women always say that?" he queried. "I wish I could find one who wanted to be very original, and so said, 'Do be silly,' just for a change."

"Oh, if it comes to originality," she said, "men are not original, either. Whenever they get laid down in the shade, they always begin to talk nonsense."

"But nonsense is such fun to talk in the shade."

"You are still holding my hand!"

"Yes; I know it."

"I am astonished that you do not remember your Aunt Mary's teaching better."

"She never forbid my holding your hand."

"Suppose anyone should come suddenly down the path?"

"They would see us and turn and go back."

"To tell everyone——"

"What?"

"A lie."

Jack laughed, and drew a little nearer.

"Now, don't be silly," said his companion, for the second time. "I won't stand it, you know, because I'm only playing myself, you know."

"The shadow of love," he suggested.

"Quite so."

"And if——" He leaned quite near.

"Not by any means," she exclaimed, springing quickly to her feet.

"Why must we?" he remonstrated.

"You know why," she said. "It's time we were being sensible. When a man gets as near as you are, I prefer to be *en promenade*. And don't let us be foolish any longer, either. Let us be cool and worldly. How much money has your aunt, anyhow?"

Jack had risen, too.

"What impertinence!" he ejaculated.

"Not at all," she said. "Maude has so much money of her own that I ask in a wholly disinterested spirit."

"She's very rich," said Jack. "But if your spirit is so disinterested, what do you want to know for?"

"This is a world of chance, and the main chance in a woman's case is alimony; so it's always nice to know how to figure it."

"It's a slim chance for your cousin," said Jack. "Do tell her that I said so."

"No, I shan't," said she, perversely. "I won't be a go-between for you and her. Besides, as to that alimony, there are more heiresses than Maude in our family."

"Yes," said he; "I know that. But I know, too, that there is one among them who need never figure on getting any alimony out of me. If I ever get the iron grasp of the law on that heiress, I can assure you that only her death or mine will ever loosen its fangs."

"How fierce you are!" said Mrs. Rosscott. "Why do you get so worked up?"

"Oh," he exclaimed, with something approaching a groan, "I don't mean to be—but I *do* care so much. And sometimes——"

She looked up at him. The little blue heavens that lay between her double fringe of curly eyelashes reflected his gaze in a manner that was beyond the withstanding of mortal man.

So he seized her and kissed her.

"Don't be angry," he pleaded.

"I'm not," she murmured. "But you'll have to marry me now. My other husband did."

"When?" he asked, breathlessly.

She looked down at the ground.

"Oh, not for years and years," she said, softly.

"For years and years!" he cried, in astonishment.

"That's what I said," she told him.

He released her in his surprise and stared hard at her. And then he seized her again and kissed her soundly.

"You don't mean it!" he declared.

"I do mean it!" she declared.

And then she shook her head in a very sweet but painfully resolute manner.

"I won't be called a cradle robber," she said, firmly; and at that her companion swore mildly but fervently.

"You're so young," she said further; "and not a bit settled," she added.

"But you're young, too," he reminded her.

"I'm older than you are," she said.

"I suppose that you aren't any more settled than I am, and that's why you hesitate," he said, grimly.

"Now that's unworthy of you," she cried; "and I have a good mind——"

But the direful words were never spoken, for she was in his arms again—close in his arms; and, as he kissed her with a delicious sensation that it was all too good to be true, he whispered, laughing:

"I always meant to lord it over my wife, so I'll begin by saying: 'Have it your own way, as long as I have you.'"

Mrs. Rosscott laid her cheek against his coat lapel, and looked up into his eyes with the sweetest smile that even he had ever seen upon even her face.

"It's a bargain," she murmured.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE PEACE AND CALM OF THE COUNTRY.

Along in the beginning of the new year, Aunt Mary began suddenly to grow very feeble indeed. She had not

been strong all winter, and, in consequence, had been utterly unable to spend the holidays in the city, as she had planned; and that disappointment had seemed to take all the vitality right out of her.

Jack came home instead, and spent three days with her; and Clover, en route from New York to the other place, broke his train ride and her monotony all at once by sleeping under her roof one night. But the reaction after the excitement appeared to affect her worse than ever, and she took to her bed, pronounced life in general as "dopy," and became more difficult than ever to live with.

"I'm goin' to town jus' 's soon as ever I feel well enough," she declarred aggressively on more than one occasion. "An' nex' time I go I'm goin' to stay jus' 's long as ever I'm havin' a good time. Now, don't contradict me, Lucinda, because it's your place to hold your tongue. I'm a great believer in your holding your tongue, Lucinda."

Lucinda held her tongue, and the poor, unhappy one twisted about in bed, and bemoaned the quietude of her environment by the hour at a time.

"Did you say we had a calf?" she asked, suddenly, one day.

Lucinda nodded.

"Well, I want Joshua to take that calf to the blacksmith and have him shod behind an' before right off. To-day—this minnit."

"You want the calf shod!" cried Lucinda, fairly convinced that her mistress had gone light-headed.

Aunt Mary glared.

"If I said shod, I guess I meant shod," she said, icily. "I do sometimes mean what I say. Pretty often—as a usual thing."

Lucinda stood at the foot of the bed, petrified and paralyzed.

Aunt Mary took pity on her helpless fright.

"I want the calf shod," she explained, "so's Joshua can run up an' down the porch with him."

So far from ameliorating Lucinda's condition, this explanation rendered it visibly worse. Aunt Mary contemplated her in silence for a few seconds, and then she suddenly cried out, in a tone that was full of pathos:

"I feel like maybe—*maybe*—the calf'll make me think it's horses' feet on the pavement."

The maid quitted the room abruptly.

As the days passed on, she slept more and more, and awoke to an ever-increasing ratio of belligerency.

It was not long before Lucinda's third cousin demanded her assistance during "moving," and Arethusa had to take up the burden, now become a fearfully heavy one.

Aunt Mary was getting to that period when the nearer the relative the greater the dislike, so that her greeting to her niece was even less cordial than ever.

"Did you bring a trunk?" she asked.

"A small one," replied the visitor.

"That's something to be grateful for," said the aunt. "If I'd *invited* you to visit me, of course I'd feel differently about things."

Arethusa unfolded her sewing, and ere she had threaded her needle Aunt Mary was sound asleep. Her niece sewed placidly for an hour or more, and then, like lightning out of a clear sky:

"Arethusa!"

"Yes, Aunt Mary."

"When I die, I want to be buried from a roof garden! Don't you forget! You'd better go an' write it down. Go now—go this minnit!"

Arethusa was counting stitches, and waited five-eighths of a second before rising. Aunt Mary saw her lips move slightly; she sat up in bed, and her eyes flashed cinders.

"Quit your kiddin'!" she said, sharply.

Arethusa shook as if with the discharge of a contiguous field battery.

"I won't stand it," the old lady continued, wrathfully. "It's bad enough to live with a pack of idiots without havin' 'em, one an' all, act as if I was the idiot!"

Arethusa laid aside her work and rose to quit the room. When she returned five minutes later, Aunt Mary was off on another tack.

"I want a bulldog!" she cried, imperatively.

"A *bulldog!*" shrieked her niece. "What *do* you want a bulldog for?"

"Not a bullfrog!" the old lady corrected; "a bulldog." Then she sat up in bed and gave her pillow a punch that was full of dire suggestion.

"Oh, I do get so sick of your stupidity, Arethusa," she said, lying down again. "What should I or anyone else want of a bullfrog?"

Arethusa sighed, and the sigh was apparent.

"I'd sigh if I was you," said her aunt. "I certainly would. If I was you, Arethusa, I'd certainly feel that I had cause to sigh."

Arethusa did not gainsay the truth of this proposition. It was too apparent.

The next day Aunt Mary slept until noon, and then opened her eyes and simultaneously declared:

"Next summer I'm goin' to have an automobile!"

Then she looked about her and saw that she had addressed the air, which made her very vexed. She rang violently, and Arethusa left the lunch table so hastily that she reached her aunt's room half choked.

"Next summer I'm goin' to have an automobile," said the old lady, angrily. "Now get me some breakfast."

Her niece went out quickly, and a maid was sent in with tea and toast and eggs at once. Their effect was to brace the invalid up and make the lot of those about her yet more wearing.

"I shall run it myself," she vowed, when Arethusa returned; "an' I bet they clear out when they see me comin'."

It did seem highly probable.

"Go an' get the crank of the ice-cream freezer an' lay it where I can see it," was the next command; then, one second later: "Well, why ain't you gone? I'm a great believer in doin' things promptly. Always."

Arethusa went and brought the crank of the ice-cream freezer, and laid it down beside her aunt's glasses. The general effect was carefully scrutinized, and proved very unsatisfactory.

"Anyone'd know it wasn't an automobile crank. Take it back. I don't want to look like a fool."

Arethusa restored the crank to the freezer.

"Oh, *dear!*" her aunt wailed when she returned. "I don't know how I can live if I don't get away from here soon. You don't appreciate what life here is, Arethusa! Seems like I'll go mad with wantin' to be somewhere else. I can see Jack gets his disposition straight from me."

There was a sigh, and a pause.

"I shall die," Aunt Mary then declared, with violence, "if I don't have a change. Arethusa, you've got to write to Jack, and tell him to get me Granite."

"Granite!" screamed the niece, in surprise.

"Yes, Granite. She was a maid I had in New York. I want her to come here. She must come. Tell him to offer her anything, and send her C. O. D. If I can have Granite, maybe I'll feel some better. You write Jack."

"I'll write to-night," shrieked Arethusa.

"No, you won't," said her Aunt Mary; "you'll get the ink and write right now. Because I've been meeker'n Moses all my life is no reason that I'm willin' to be downtrodden clear to the end. Folks around me'd better begin to look sharp an' step lively from now on."

Arethusa went for the ink at once.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### TWO NOTES.

MY DARLING: Aunt Mary is ill and demands Janice. What shall I write her? Shall I say that the girl has left you?

I, etc., etc., etc., Always your J.

MY DEAR BOY: Janice is going to your aunt by the night train. I am so glad to be able to do anything for one of yours. Don't you know that I, etc., etc., etc.,

Yours, B.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### GRANITE.

Joshua drove through mud and rain to bring Aunt Mary's solace from the station.

Aunt Mary had herself propped up in bed to be ready for the return, before

the horses' feet had ceased to cry splash on the road outside of the gate. Her eagerness tinged her pallor pink.

"My gracious heavens, Lucinda" (for Lucinda was back now), she said, joyfully, "to think that I needn't look at you for a week if I don't want to."

Lucinda rocked placidly; hers was what is called an "even disposition." If it hadn't have been, she might have led an entirely different life—in fact, she would most certainly have lived somewhere else, for she couldn't possibly have lived with Aunt Mary.

The hour that ensued after Joshua's departure was so long that it resulted in a nap for the invalid, and Lucinda had to wake her by slamming the closet door when the arrival turned in the gate.

"Has he got her?" Aunt Mary cried, breathlessly. "Has he got some one with him? Run, Lucinda, an' bring her in. She needn't wipe her feet, tell her; you can brush the hall afterwards. Well, why ain't you hurryin'?"

Just then Janice appeared in the door. Lucinda was just behind her—a striking contrast.

"You dear, blessed Granite!" cried the old lady, stretching out her hands. "Oh, my! but I'm glad to see you! Come right straight here. No; shut the door first. (Lucinda, you go out an' do 'most anything.) An' how *is* the city?"

Janice came to the bedside and dropped on her knees there, taking Aunt Mary's withered hand in hers and kissing it.

"You didn't shut the door," the old lady whispered, hoarsely. "I wish you would—an' bolt it, too. An' then come straight back to me."

Janice closed and bolted the door, and returned to the bedside. Aunt Mary drew her down close to her, and her voice and eyes were hungry, indeed, as she said:

"Granite, *have* you got any cigarettes with you?"

The maid shook her head sadly.

"Do you smoke now?" she asked, with interest.

"No," said Aunt Mary, "an' that's the trouble. I'm achin' to smell smoke, an' Joshua promised his mother the night before he was twenty-one. It's terrible how I feel. I'm empty somewhere jus' all the time. Don't you believe 't you could get some cigarettes an' smoke 'em right close to me, an' let me lay here, an' be so happy while I smell. I'll have a good doctor for you, if you're sick from it."

The maid reflected; then she nodded.

"I'll write to town," she cried, in her high, clear tones. "What brand do you like best?"

"Mitchell's," said Aunt Mary. "But you can't get those, because he made 'em himself an' sealed 'em with a lick. Oh!" she sighed, with the accent of a starving Sybarite, "I do wish I could see him do it again!"

Janice began to take off her hat and cloak.

"That's your room in there," Aunt Mary said, pointing toward a half-open door at the side. "I wanted you as close as I could get you."

Janice went in, and hung up her things.

"Can you hum 'Hiawatha'?" she was asked when she came back. "An' can you do that kind of sh—sh—sh that everybody does all together at the end, you know?"

Janice smiled, and, placing herself in the closest possible proximity with the ear trumpet, rendered the desired "morceau" in a style which would have done credit to a soloist in a Café Chantant.

Aunt Mary's lips wreathed in seraphic bliss.

"My!" she said. "I feel just as if I was back eatin' crabs' legs and tails again. No one'll ever know how I've missed city life this winter but—well, you saw Lucinda!"

Janice nodded sympathetically.

"I hope you brought a trunk. I ain't a bit sure when I'll be able to let you go," pursued the old lady. "I don't believe I *can* let you go until I go, too. I've 'most died here alone."

"I brought a trunk," Janice cried into the ear trumpet.

"I'm glad," said Aunt Mary. She paused, and her eyes grew wistful.

"Granite," she asked, "*do* you think you could manage to do a skirt dance

on the footboard? I'm 'most wild to see some lace shake."

Janice looked doubtfully at the footboard. It was wide for a footboard, but narrow—too narrow—for a skirt dance.

"But I can do one on the floor," she cried.

Aunt Mary's features became suffused with ecstasy.

"Oh, *Granite!*" she murmured, in joyful accents.

The maid stood up, and, going off as far as the limits of the spacious bedroom would allow, executed a most fetching and dainty *pas seul* to a tune of her own humming.

"Give me suthin' to pound with!" cried her enthusiastic audience. "Oh, Granite! I ain't been so happy since I was home! Whatever you want you can have, only *don't* ever leave me alone with Lucinda again."

Janice was catching her tired breath, but she answered with a smile.

"Can't you get my Sunday umbrella out of the closet now an' do a parasol dance?" the insatiate demanded; "one of those where you shoot it open an' shut when people ain't expectin'."

Janice went to the closet, and brought out the Sunday umbrella; but its shiny black silk did not appear to inspire any fluffy maneuvers, so she utilized it in the guise of a broadsword and did something that savored of the Highlands, and seemed to rebel bitterly at the length of her skirt.

Aunt Mary writhed around in a bliss, both utter and intense.

"I'll tell you what, Granite," she said when the girl sat down to rest. "You write for those cigarettes while I take a little nap, and afterwards we'll get the Universal Knowledge book and learn how to play poker."

Janice nodded assent.

"Excuse me shuttin' my eyes," said Aunt Mary—and was asleep in two minutes.

## CHAPTER XX.

Mary and Arethusa—Aunt Mary's two nieces—were not uncommonly mercenary; but about three weeks after the new maid's arrival they became seriously troubled over the ascendancy that she appeared to be gaining over the mind of their aunt. Lucinda's advices from the seat of government were so very alarming that first Mary, and then Arethusa, went personally to look into the matter. They found Mrs. Rosscott's maid apparently devoid of evil intent, but certainly fast becoming absolutely indispensable to the daily happiness of their influential relative. Mary feared that a codicil for five thousand dollars would be the result; but Arethusa felt, with a sinking heart, that there was another naught going on to the sum, and that, unless the tide turned, the end might not be even then.

Aunt Mary was so cool that neither niece stayed long, and Lucinda's letters had to be looked to for the progress of events. Lucinda's letters were frequent and not at all reassuring. After the sisters had talked them over, they sent them on to Jack.

She (thus Lucinda invariably began), is the same as ever. It's cross the heart an' bend the knee, an' then you ain't down far enough to suit her. But she's gettin' so afraid she'll go that she's wax in her hands. It would scare you. She won't let her out of her sight a minute. I must say that whatever she's giving her, she certainly is earning the money, for she works her harder every day. The poor thing is hopping about, or singing, or playing cards, from dawn to dark, and unless it's a provision in her will I can't see what would pay her enough for working so. Lord knows I considered I earned my wages without skipping around with my legs crossed like she does, and she has no end of patience, too, even if she won't ever let her take a walk. She's getting as pale as she is herself. Seems like something should be done.

Respectfully, L. Cooke.

Three days later Lucinda wrote again:

She does seem to be getting worse and worse. She makes her sleep on a sofa beside her, and she begins to look dreadfully worn out. I do believe she'll kill her, before she dies herself. I told her so to-day, but she only smiled. It's funny, but I like her even if I am bolted out all the time. I ain't jealous, and I'm glad of the rest. I should think her throat would split with talking to her so much, but she certainly does hear her better than anyone else. I

think something must be done, though. She's getting as crazy as she is herself. They play cards and call each other 'aunty' for two hours at a stretch some days.

Respectfully, L. COOKE.

At the end of the week Lucinda wrote again:

I think if you don't come, she will surely die. She is very feeble herself, but that don't keep her from wearing her to skin and bone. She keeps her doing tricks from morning to night. Every minute that she is awake she keeps her jumping. It's a mercy she sleeps so much, or she wouldn't get any sleep at all. I can't do nothing, but I can see something has got to be done. She's killing her, and she's getting where she don't care for nothing nor nobody but her, and if she's to be kept in trim to keep on amusing her she'll have to have some rest pretty quick.

Respectfully, L. COOKE.

If the sisters were perturbed by the general trend of these epistles, Jack was half wild over the situation. In vain he wrote to Mrs. Rosscott to restore Janice to her proper place in town; Mrs. Rosscott answered that as long as Aunt Mary desired Janice at her side, at her side Janice should stay.

"I'm a fool," he said at last, in a vexation that bordered on utter loss of patience. "I'll go to Aunt Mary's, and straighten out that mess in short order."

It was Saturday morning, and he arranged to leave by the noon train. It was an unconscionably long ride, but he arrived safely about ten o'clock.

The night was wet and moist, but no rain was absolutely in the act of falling, so he walked toward the old homestead. The breath of spring was heavy on the damp, sweet air; he could almost hear the tree-buds swelling—almost listen to the foot-tread of the myriad armies of insect life which were pouring out of their long hiding again. When he drew near his childhood's home he saw Lucinda's light in the dining room and her pug-nosed profile outlined upon the drawn shade. Everyone else was evidently abed. As he looked, she arose and took up the lamp; he hurried his steps so that she might let him in before she went upstairs, but in the same instant the light went out, and with its withdrawal of illumination he perceived a little figure sitting outside.

His heart gave a sudden leap—perhaps with fright.

Of course, it was Janice; and when he came close he saw that she was crying bitterly, and was too much absorbed in the occupation to have heard him.

He stood still for fear of startling her, and called himself a brute and every other hard name that he could think of until finally she lifted up her eyes.

She did not scream.

And her eyes were beautiful.

He threw his suit case down on the grass, took the maid to his bosom, and kissed her. All else in the world was naught to him just then; the kiss was sweet, and he and she both needed comforting.

Aunt Mary was undeniably glad to see Jack. It was evident that Janice had not superseded *him* in her affections. She took him into the poker games and cigarette *séances* with hospitable fervor, and couldn't understand the maid's objections to exhibiting her other accomplishments for his delectation.

But after the first day, all the various lights of the situation became only too clear to the newcomer. The old lady was growing feebler daily, the maid was a slave of all her caprices, and the health of the latter was giving way under the strain.

"Why do you humor her so?" he asked, as they sat waiting for Aunt Mary to finish one of her daily naps. "I wouldn't, if I were you."

Janice lifted her beautiful eyes.

"Yes, you would," she said, quietly.

Jack was so sure that his aunt was asleep that he dared to kiss her maid again as he had kissed her the night of his arrival.

But Aunt Mary opened her eyes and saw, and closed them again afterwards, and waited.

When Janice had left the room, she suddenly demanded of her nephew:

"What did you kiss her for?"

Jack regretted what he had done

acutely, and saw nothing to do but remain silent.

"You don't deny that you kissed her, do you? Answer this minnit. I'm a great believer in answering when you're spoken to."

"I kissed her," he replied, dryly.

"Then you've got to marry her," she assured him, vigorously. "You've got to marry her right here and now! I ain't goin' to have that young Granite's life blighted by anyone that I have the say about."

Jack moistened his lips.

"Will you marry her?"

"Do you think that she wants to marry me?"

"No; I don't want to," shrieked Janice, entering just then with the everlasting tea and toast.

She looked at Jack and he looked at her.

"Why don't you?" asked Aunt Mary; "why don't you? What in Heaven's name are you hopin' to marry if my nephew isn't good enough for you?"

"I don't want to marry now," Janice cried, setting down the tea tray, and thrusting her hands deep into her ruffled pockets.

"You go out an' leave her to me," said his aunt to Jack. "I'm a great believer in 'Two's company, three's none'; that's why I wouldn't ever let Lucinda keep a cat."

Jack went out.

"Now, Granite," said Aunt Mary, looking severely at her maid, "I ain't intendin' to be unreasonable, but I jus' want you to answer me one simple question. Why in Heaven's name ain't you willin' to marry a man that you're willin' to kiss?"

"There's such a difference!" Janice wailed.

"I don't see it," said Aunt Mary. "I never thought for a minnit of doin' either myself; but if I'd thought of doin' either I'd have had sense enough to make up my mind to do both. I'm a great believer in never doin' things by halves. It don't pay. Never—nohow."

"But I don't want to marry!"

"Then what did you kiss him for? You've set him to thinkin' that you loved him, an' now ten to one his heart's broken. I want him to settle down, but I don't want him to settle down jus' because you've shattered him. He wants to marry you, an' I don't see no good reason why not?"

Janice's mouth looked rebellious.

"Go call him back," Aunt Mary commanded.

Jack was called back.

"I want some jam with my tea," said his aunt, looking hard at him. "You can hold the candle while Janice gets it. I guess everything'll come out all right down in the cellar."

"It's like a dream," Jack said, ten minutes later, "to think of my owing Aunt Mary to you, and you to Aunt Mary!"

Mrs. Rosscott laughed softly.

"Of all my many and varied adventures!" she said. "But only suppose if she had insisted on your marrying Lucinda!"

"I refuse to consider Lucinda," he said; and Lucinda, listening at the top of the steps, heard him.

Neither Aunt Mary, happy in the union of her two darlings, nor the darlings, happy in one another, stopped for a second to consider Lucinda; but Lucinda was not idle.

Arethusa was nearly electrocuted by the news contained in the next letter:

> She is certainly happy now; she has it all made up for her to marry him. It is quite a blessing to see how sweet-tempered she is, even when she wakes up and finds she's out walking with him. They are going to be married next Wednesday, right by her bed. I shouldn't like it for myself, but she don't mind.

Arethusa took wing for the scene of the drama, and crossed the letter asking her to her brother's wedding. She found Janice still waiting on Aunt Mary, but another maid had arrived to wait upon Janice. The latter had shed her black uniform and bloomed forth in rose-hued robes.

Clover arrived shortly, and Mitchell, and Burnett.

"I suppose I am to give you away," the latter told his sister; "before all these people, too! What a mean trick!"

Aunt Mary's bed was the White Plume to which they all rallied. She was iridescent with rapture. Mr. Stebbins was kept continually on tap, and her checks flowed like water.

"I always knew that you must be suthin' uncommon," she said to Janice. "I'm awful glad you're to have the runnin' of Jack. All I ask is that you'll be patient with him. I always was. Most always."

Mrs. Rosscott smiled.

"An' you'll live in New York, an' I'll live with you," Aunt Mary added.

Mrs. Rosscott smiled again.

On the wedding day Aunt Mary reigned supreme. She suddenly regained her strength, quitted her bed, and insisted on having the wedding in the parlor, on the very spot where Jack had received her father's name. Afterwards a collation, that had come from the city in its own special car, was served by the votaries whom it brought with it. There was champagne galore, and Aunt Mary tried some, but preferred Apollinaris, since its taste reminded her of New York. They drank to the bride and bridegroom, and then they drank to Aunt Mary "glasses down." The bridegroom said that he owed her the bride, and the bride said that she owed her the bridegroom. Among the wedding gifts was the biggest and brightest of scarlet automobiles, and they all drank next to her going around the world in it.

It was a happy time, and so far from killing the old lady, it seemed to do her good. After the departure of the bridal party, she abandoned her *régime* of soup and sleep and began to make plans for the summer.

"I shall get me an opera coat, and have my glasses put on a parasol handle," she told Lucinda, "and I mean to have as much as a trunk tray of new clothes jus' as soon as I can buy 'em. I'm a great believer in doin' as others do, an' Jack won't never have no reason to say I didn't take easy to city life."

About a week later a telegram came.

DEAR AUNT MARY: We're home and ready when you are. Telegraph what train.
J. AND J.

The telegram was handed to Aunt Mary at ten in the morning. Her hand shook as she opened it.

"My heavens alive, Lucinda!" she cried, the next minute, "I do believe, if you'll be quick, that I can make the twelve-twenty. Run! Tell Joshua to get my trunk down and harness Billy as quick as he can. He can telegraph that I'm comin' after I'm gone."

She made the train.

## PAST USE

SPRING—and the fluttering stir
Of two soft, gray wings;
Blue eggs, and a gabled roof
Where a glad bird sings.

Autumn—the turning sere
Of the rainbowed leaves;
And swinging, forsaken and brown,
A nest in the eaves.

ALLAN MUNIER.

# THE FIRST MEET*

By Vincent Harper

"WILL you look at Fordy, major. He looks as though a groom had lamed Mephisto, or somebody had said barbed wire to him, or his mother had just died, or the world had come to an end," laughed Mrs. Craigie, bringing her critical lorgnette to bear on March.

"The dear boy does realize his terrible responsibility, does he not? But, then, you know, my dear Mrs. Craigie, March takes the horse seriously—rides to hounds with the spirit of an early martyr," chuckled the major.

They were sitting, Major Hartopp and his hostess, just in the shadow of the Moorish room, through whose carved ebony arches they could see March and Lord Bertie, who had remained in the brilliantly lighted white-and-gold music room in which these delightful little hunt dinner dances took place at "Pen-Craigie." All the others having scattered about the hall and conservatories and portrait gallery, March seized the opportunity to dilate upon the sorrows of a master of fox hounds in America to Lord Bertie, the English crack who had come to honor his first meet.

"Ah, but you see, my dear Lord Bertie," said March, blissfully unconscious of the ambuscade in the adjoining dimly lighted Moorish room, "of course we have no end of wealthy men over here; but it is impossible to get them to be also men of leisure, while as for ever making a genuine country gentleman out of the American breed—well, it can't be done."

"Just hear him—the villain!" murmured Mrs. Craigie.

"Sh-h! He's only getting warmed up," replied the major, to whose seasoned philosophy of life March was an unending joy.

"Yes," went on March, warmly, "with the men all running off to their offices in town two or three times a week, and the women opening their town houses not only in Horse Show week, but constantly—how the deuce can we hope to create any real country life as you have it on the other side? And, then, until I put a stop to it, our meets were held only on Saturday half-holidays and Thanksgiving Day—as though the Norbury Hunt were an association of department-store clerks! And as for the riding—good Lord! I tell you, these men don't know what a genuine 'cross-country gentleman is! No, nor what riding to hounds really should be! They ride for torpidity of the liver, or to reduce their weight; and the women—save us!"

"Beast!"

"Sh-h!"

"Oh, I say, you know, old chap, aren't you a bit hard? I saw Mrs. Dudley-West ride at Meadowbrook, and I can jolly well tell you she, at any rate, is fit," protested Lord Bertie.

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*"The First Meet" begins a series of hunting stories which will appear in consecutive numbers of this magazine, each story being complete in itself. Though the wonderful exhilaration of a ride to the hounds across a broken country can be fully appreciated only by those who experience it, yet no one can read these stories, so full of the life and color of the hunting field, without feeling the rich glow of healthy excitement of an actual participant. The author has succeeded to an extraordinary degree in surrounding interesting people and absorbing action with a vivid, picturesque and altogether convincing atmosphere.—THE EDITORS

"Oh, I never include Mrs. Dudley-West. She is the exception that proves the rule—and she *is* fit, is she not?" replied March. "But look at the rest! And look at the people whom they all bring here! They might invite the smart women from the other hunts, to show our girls the real article; but instead of that they fill up the houses with week-end parties of women who can't ride, or, what is worse, women who think they can!"

Mrs. Craigie and the major looked at each other—and the same thought broke like a revelation into their minds.

"The wretch! And I have brought Diana all the way from Kentucky for his first meet—the best seat in the blue grass country!" said Mrs. Craigie.

"He does not know that she rides. Go and get her—oh, this is too delightful! —and we can revenge ourselves. You see it, don't you?" replied the major, grasping Mrs. Craigie's hand eagerly.

"Palm her off on him as a—— I see! I see!"

They stole out of the dark like conspirators, and soon a council began to assemble mysteriously in the fitting obscurity of the Moorish room—Mrs. Craigie returning with Mr. Craigie, who sizzled with cunning and rubbed his restless little hands and poked his finger into the major's waistcoat, and said: "He did, eh? Well, sir, we'll take a fall out of the frisky two-year-old—feels his oats, damme, feels his oats;" the major and Peabody deep in unholy plotting; and Diana Merrill, looking puzzled but expectant as she followed Mrs. Craigie's weird suggestion to "come at once to the Moorish room—important—don't let anybody see you!"

Under the faint, ruddy glow of the hanging mosque lamps the conspirators at once began a whispered conference, unfortunately interrupted just as Miss Merrill had said: "Ride? Can *I* ride? Why, I was bo'n 'n raised in the saddle, as they say down home! But what does it all mean?"

"Hush! Some one is coming," said Mrs. Craigie; while the major murmured: "Glorious! Just as I thought!" And the meeting adjourned to resume its session when everyone else had gone.

On the following morning the master of the Norbury fox hounds was nervous. Furthermore, he was cornered—not to say in a hole. Now, none of these states was characteristic of Fordyce March, of "The Paddock" and the Knickerbocker Club, Esquire, and newly elected M. F. H. of the Norbury Hunt. Forty thousand a year and six feet of perennially good health—both the result of having carefully selected his parents—had produced in "Fordy," the fastidious, an eminently unruffled temperament. But an M. F. H. has troubles of his own, and the master of Norbury, on the morning of the first meet since his election, was nervous and grumpy and mad clear through.

Being a man of large property but no affairs, the management of details always weighed heavy on his soul; and, being a man of independence in every sense of the word, interference with his plans chafed him like misfit harness. Accordingly, the arrangements for his maiden meet had told on his nerves, and the note just received from Mrs. Craigie —the autocrat of all the Norburies, whose note, therefore, was an ukase—finished him.

"Great Scott, man! What the deuce is up now? You look all in," said Peabody, who had hastened in pajamas and bath robe to his host's room, in response to urgent signals of distress, reported thence by Mr. March's man.

"All in? Rather! Didn't sleep a wink all night—and now just have a look at that!" replied March, tossing the note to Peabody without rising from the lounge.

Peabody picked up the note, and read aloud:

PEN-CRAIGIE.

MY DEAR FORDY: If this finds you still in bed and routs you out, I shall feel that I have done you a service in advance for the one you are going to do me, like a dear fellow. You just can't refuse me, you know, for I've been altogether too lovely in asking all your pink coats to dine last evening—much as I hate horses in the house!

Well, Diana Merrill whom you met last night—Maria Brummell's daughter that was —your mother will remember Maria, as we

were all at school together—is stopping with me, you know, and as I want the poor child to witness a ride to hounds, *you* are to have the honor of taking charge of her to-day, though you don't deserve it, you bad boy! Mrs. Dudley-West will fetch Diana to you at half after nine, and you must see that she gets a good, quiet, thoroughly reliable horse, for I shall feel nervous until she returns, because this is a new experience for her, poor girl—brought up by an aunt or something out in the Middle West somewhere.

The major tells me that as master of the hounds you will be quite free to move about as you please, so I choose to have you move about as I please. Now, Fordy dear, *do* draw the dear girl out, like a good boy, and give her all the pointers you can—you know, about mounting, and holding the reins, and what to call things, and all that—so that she may not appear too green. Above all things, don't let her out of your sight—and if I hear that you have made fun of her—goodness only knows what she will wear!—then, sir, you may expect to hear from

Yours ever so gratefully,
HONORIA ELLIOTT CRAIGIE.

Wednesday morning.

P. S.—If you will arrange to have the death at some convenient spot—say, in front of the post office—I'll try to be on hand in the auto car; but it must not be later than four o'clock, remember. H. E. C.

Peabody whistled and looked at March, who lay as if in a trance, with his eyes shut.

"Play the devoted squire to a girl never in the saddle before—at your first meet!" laughed Peabody, holding up his hands.

"Maria Brummel-that-was's daughter!" groaned March, turning over on his face and pummeling the pillows.

"As master of the hunt, you will be perfectly free——"

"To draw the blooming girlie out!" broke in another groan.

"Which is all she needs," rubbed in Peabody, unmercifully.

"Brought up by an aunt in Ohio somewhere!" wailed the M. F. H., hurling a cushion at Peabody's head.

"And you are to have the honor of introducing the result of the said bringing up," roared Peabody, making immediate reprisal by bringing down the heavy tassel of his girdle upon an exposed point of the enemy's frontier; and then adding: "But, I say, Fordy, what did you ever do to the major?"

"The villain dies!" answered March, rising, and then saying, fiercely: "But, damn it, Bert! it's nine now, and Maria's daughter will be here in half an hour!"

"And Mrs. Dudley-West—unique breakfast party we'll have," added Peabody.

"Shut up! I'm getting dangerous. Now, old man, what would you do in my case? Here I am—and Maria's daughter due any minute. What would you do?"

"Dress, I think, first," suggested Peabody, getting out of the door just in time to escape an assault in force.

Peabody hurried to the telephone and reported progress to the major, who thereupon communicated with Mrs. Craigie, who sent on the cheering intelligence to Mrs. Dudley-West and a very few other choice souls—and great was their rejoicing. Meanwhile March's man so expedited that gentleman's toilet that in fifteen minutes the M. F. H. joined his half-dozen guests, who were already deep in ham-and-eggs, stewed kidneys, and a lively discussion of the coming day's sport.

They were thoroughbreds, every one—"five-rail" cracks from Meadowbrook, the best of the Westchesters, one or two real ones from Philadelphia and Baltimore, and—joy of joys!—Lord Bertie Orth and his brother, Lord Arthur, the pride of the English field. And March, in spite of his pessimistic remarks, felt that the Norbury Hunt would show these gentry a thing or two, for there was the major, and Peabody, and Freddy Ackers the mighty, *and* Mrs. Dudley-West—thanks be! But, now, out of a clear sky, had burst Mrs. Craigie's note—and March swore that he would defy her, and not make a fiasco of his first meet. Was she crazy? Damn it!

He had just announced this ultimatum as he and Peabody stood smoking on the veranda after breakfast, when Mrs. Dudley-West's trap turned into the gates far down the avenue, and March, with a sinking feeling, caught the first glimpse of Maria's daughter.

In two minutes the trap was at his steps, the groom at the cob's head, and the M. F. H. welcoming his first re-

cruits. Mrs. Dudley-West was perfection, as usual, her splendid hair lying, a mass of gold, low on her neck and crowned by a silk hat of smart block, while her habit, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, clung to her slight, lithe figure and brought out the ease and grace of her carriage. Glancing over her, much as he did at the harness on taking the reins, March turned from the perfect satisfaction that was Mrs. Dudley-West to the unknown and decidedly uncertain article made in Ohio somewhere.

The girl who jumped lightly from the high cart was tall, and March noted that in face and figure and in the abundance and sheen of her chestnut hair the younger woman did not suffer from her nearness to the stunning elder; but her dress—oh, Lord! Her hat—at a hunt in early autumn—was a large Leghorn with an 1830 droop, which, March thought, bore testimony to a mamma named Maria, a maiden aunt in Ohio, and the mutability of fashion. She wore done-over kid gloves, not gauntlets, but her habit was rather well cut—well worn, too, for March's expert eye detected grayish spots where the pommels had chafed. But, after all, in the post-graduate school of equestrian good form in which March was a professor, the supreme test is—boots! By their boots ye shall know them. Perhaps she would stand the test; so March watched his opportunity, and presently spied slippers. Merciful heavens! Slippers!

Strange to say, however, March secretly hoped that Peabody and the nest of cynics that he felt were watching the scene from the billiard-room window had not observed these discouraging details, for somehow the girl, in spite of her having just sat for a daguerreotype of her grandmother, appealed to him. Neither the shabby habit nor the unthinkable slippers could hide the fact that Miss Merrill was a woman of exceeding comeliness. No habit could possibly give the lie to that straight back and those square, distinguished shoulders, while the slippers certainly covered fit little feet. Her mellow, seemingly Southern voice, too, and the way that she did not act when he was presented, struck March favorably—until he suddenly remembered that he had been commanded to devote his critical first meet to giving this illustration from the first edition of *The Gentlewoman's Gazette and Mirror* her first riding lesson!

"Well, you see, Mr. March, I've brought you a recruit," said Mrs. Dudley-West, after the formalities.

"Charmed," replied March, gallantly; but adding at once, with considerable solicitude: "But do you ride, Miss Merrill?"

"Those about here who have seen me say I do not," laughed Diana; and the M. F. H.'s feeling that, at dinner, at any rate, if not in the field, Maria's daughter might not be half bad, don't you know, was cordially shared by the pink-coat contingent reconnoitering from the billiard-room window.

"But I just love a horse," went on Diana, in a way that made March take heart of grace, and hope for her ultimate salvation.

"Then you may depend upon it, you'll make a capital seat—in time, of course. Perhaps, however, you might not care to try a stiffish dash 'cross country the first time," suggested March, diplomatically, and praying for deliverance.

"Oh, of course, I've ridden a lot, but never after the dogs," explained Maria's daughter, cheerfully, and Mrs. Dudley-West winked—she thought slyly—at March, who was trying not to join in the wicked joy of the ambuscade in the billiard room at the thought of riding "after the dogs."

"Oh, I didn't mean that, you know," exclaimed Diana, having noticed the wink, and extending a general pardon to the two visible and the numerous invisible veterans by joining in the laugh; "but—what was it Lord Arthur called it? Oh, yes—riding to hounds; not as grammatical as 'after,' is it? But, then, Mr. March is going to teach me all the proper terms as we jog along—aren't you, Mr. March?"

"Oh, yes—of course—delighted—have to learn the terms," stammered the M. F. H., praying that those pink-coated fiends in there had not heard this,

and resigning himself to trying to picture a master of fox hounds at his first meet locating a problematical fox and rounding up two score mounts new to the country, while instructing a neophyte in the terminology of the hunt, with her pointing out his infractions of grammar, "as they jogged along."

"Beg pardon, sir, but Mr. 'Obbs says as 'ow 'e thinks the sorrel is a bit horff, sir," said a groom; and March hurried after him to the stables, promising an immediate return.

"Well, my dear, what do you think of our only Fordy? Speak low, for those men in the window can hear every word," said Mrs. Dudley-West as soon as March had gone.

"Rather good looking; but *did* you see the way that he looked me over? Can he suspect, do you think?" replied Diana.

"S-sh! Not so loud! Of course not; and wasn't it killing the way he sized you up, like a filly?"

"Too funny for anything—positively rude. But——"

"Hush! He's coming. Well, Mr. March, I'll leave Miss Merrill in your care while I drive back to meet Edwardes; he's bringing Fleance and Fifi for me to choose between at the last moment," said Mrs. Dudley-West, and off she went, leaving the master and the novice standing rather awkwardly together.

March led the way to the stables, where he pointed out the horse that he had decided to have Diana ride—a sedate gray, of aristocratic lineage, it is true, but devoid of ambition and not unreasonably bent upon evil.

"Goodness! That hearse horse! If you don't mind, I'll take this one," retorted Diana, indicating The Monk—next to his own Mephisto, the best, by all odds, of the string.

"By Jove! you *are* a connoisseur, aren't you?" answered March, forgetting his annoyance at her choice in his amazement at her ability to make it.

"Yes; I just worship horses with those funny little dabs of white on their—limbs," she replied; and March realized that the day was lost. Limbs! Ye gods!

But The Monk was saddled, and March began his career of duty by stooping and holding out his upturned palm.

"To step on? Oh, no; thank you, but I couldn't think of soiling your new glove that way," remarked Maria's daughter, and even the funereal head groom almost laughed.

The feat of mounting was, however, accomplished at the horse block; and after so far bewildering The Monk as to make him spin around several times like a top she mastered the mystery of the curb rein—"we only use one rein out home, you know"—and successfully steered the slim-legged hunter out of the stable yard and trotted off down the avenue to rejoin Mrs. Dudley-West, while March wiped his brow, told a luckless groom to go to the devil, and looked at the disappearing hunter and the girl with increasingly mixed feelings. The major would catch it—damn it!

. . . . . .

The morning grew into a perfect day—crisp, without wind, and with just a tingle of frost in the air—so that, as far as the all-important matter of the weather was concerned, everything pointed to an ideal run, with foamless mounts quickened to their utmost, and the scent of the pack sharpened to perfection.

The technical rendezvous was the gate lodge at Grantby Hall, but from that point to Norbury village and beyond, the road, by eleven o'clock, was alive with arriving cavalcades from all the great houses and an attendant *cortège* of every sort of trap, from smart drags with tooting horns and brightly gowned women to pony carts with babies and Franco-Hibernian nurse maids with bonnet strings streaming aft. Around the liberty pole in front of the post office were gathered the free American people, on whose faces showed pretty well every degree of curiosity, amusement and superciliousness, though their audible comments indicated that the *profanum vulgus*—now at Norbury Center, as at all times and everywhere—was entirely

willing to have the misguided children of fortune go to any expense and trouble to furnish free circuses for the delectation of the rational majority.

At last a blast on his bugle sent the pack off toward the brush along the foot of the "Barton Lodge" woodland, where March expected the hounds would find, and the whole hunt was in motion. In and out among the thirty or forty mounts the M. F. H., riding his royal black, the mighty Mephisto, darted and wheeled, looking as dashing and handsome and fit a chap as ever bestrode saddle. Everybody seemed in fine fettle, and Lord Bertie—whose opinion these democrats seemed to reverence especially—was pleased to say no end of good things about the horses, the hounds, the country, and Mrs. Dudley-West. So, merry as a wedding, went the Norbury Hunt down the winding turnpike toward the expected cover.

But suddenly March remembered Miss Merrill and the dire results likely to follow a failure on his part to "draw the dear girl out." He found her riding with the two Tod girls at the end of the procession, her hat, as a result of her coiffure, having made bad weather of it, with a heavy list to port, and certain other indications, nowise to be alluded to, that the untried human looks upon, being bounced up and down on a hard leather rack with horns cunningly placed for torture, as an act of war. But there was the sparkle of joy in her big, gray eyes and the crimson love of life in her cheek.

"Well, here you are at last," she cried, as March brought Mephisto beside The Monk and the two dropped behind.

"Yes; and how are you getting on?" answered March, delicately ignoring all signs of demoralization.

"Finely; but, Mr. March, *is* my hat on straight?"

"It does seem to show some partiality for your left ear," replied March; adding, quickly, as he thought he saw signs of threatened trouble: "But I wouldn't mind that, you know."

It came.

"I thought so," she said, drawing rein; "and from the way my hair feels, I must look a perfect fright. Hold this a minute, please."

Before he could answer she handed him her hat, and, one by one, five hatpins, and then shook down the chestnut glory that fell over her shoulders till it touched the saddle cloth. With her mouth full of hairpins, she worked a miracle of twisting and bunching and piling which resulted in the restoration of equilibrium, and of the hat to its wonted place.

"There—that's better," she said, and they cantered forward.

As expected, the hounds found near the foot of the "Barton Lodge" woods, and the next moment the thrill of life ran through the cavalcade, and the heart of the M. F. H. beat quick as they saw the fox break from cover and strike off for the fir plantation beyond the edge of the hill. Mephisto pricked his ears and a shiver of expectancy ran through the muscles of his thin, tense flank, as if he knew well that this unfeaty dallying at the rear could not go on now that the deep, irresistible bay of the pack told that the game was on.

"Now, don't be long, for I just know that I'll——"

But March heard not. He had vanished among the leaders, and presently he was beside the gate through which the eager hunters were dashing, Mephisto cavorting and pawing impatiently as the master gave breathless directions to each as he passed.

"Mind the brook—treacherous gravel on farther bank. Yes, thank your lordship; it *was* a neat find, wasn't it? Oh, Mrs. Mortimer! you here? Good luck. All easy until you come to the ditch beyond the third stone fence—wouldn't let the young ladies risk it, Travers. No, to the left, about four rods. Good-morning, Mrs. Estcourt—and the Countess! Yes; isn't it glorious? No, no; there's a gate not a hundred yards farther on. Hello, Bert! Somewhere behind. Hope so, too; thanks, awfully! By Jove, Craigie, you don't look a day over eighty! Oh, I'm on to you, major! Probably at the quarry under Cobble Hill. Thanks! Well, well! and Miss Gladys, too! No, I'm sure there isn't

any wire between here and—— Say, Duncan, all are dining with me, you know. All serene, except the fourth fence. Ditch? No; don't know. Probably. Oh, not more than six feet wide. Bravo, old man! But now don't be an ass—go easy!"

Thus the M. F. H. shouted fragments of greeting and caution to his cohorts, as, with flushed faces and tightening reins and throbbing pulses, they broke from the impatience of the gate into the glorious fling of the open. And last of all came Maria's daughter. As a last offering upon the altar of Mrs. Craigie, March waited for her, and was rewarded by a look which, even in the delirium of the moment, he appreciated —though not for long, for she shouted to him as The Monk, fairly wild with desire to be in the running, bolted past him: "Oh, Mr. March, I've dropped my slipper—can't be very far back. I'll wait for you. So good of you!"

For one awful instant March calculated the relative obligations of a gentleman and a master of fox hounds—and then trotted dutifully back along the road to hunt the slipper, while even the Tod girls and Dr. Brathwaite had disappeared over the crest of the hill. When at last he returned with the dusty slipper he found Diana dismounted and viewing the landscape with an artist's eye.

"Lovely, are they not, those purple hills off there?" she said, as she hopped on one foot to the fence with a view to mounting thence.

"Yes, yes; but we really must push on now, you know," replied March, every ounce of his breeding being required to save his tone from rudeness.

They pushed on, and now The Monk, prudent beast, adopted an independent code of interpretation of the signals which he received from whatever it was that occupied his saddle. The steady bombardment of his side by a slipper heel, the spasmodic clutches at his mane, the alternating current of contradiction in the reins, might mean this or that; but reason being not on his saddle, but on Mephisto's, whither Mephisto went he would go also—and Mephisto's ideas on the subject of "going" were of no uncertain sort. They went, and they went straight—with reason, for they were now quite two minutes behind the field.

March heard occasional syncopated suggestions emanating from Diana, but he was absorbed by fears as to the brook which they simply must take—or make a half-mile detour, and so be lost. If the dear creature refused to be sufficiently drawn out to try the brook, life would not be worth facing afterwards.

She refused. Too late, alas! for Mephisto had barely got his nimble footing on the gravel slope on the far side when The Monk, who was too thoroughly bred to ignore the frantic tug of a lady in distress, suddenly stopped and allowed the fair one to slide along his glossy neck down to the ground.

Her peal of laughter made March look back, and the twenty yards between them made his comments safe. He came back, though only the restraint of *noblesse oblige* induced Mephisto to reconsider the jump—in the wrong direction. This time, no fence being handy, necessity overcame Ohio delicacy, and Diana accepted March's proffered palm and mounted amid painful silence. They trotted rather disconsolately along the hither bank of the stream to the ford, with conversation, in spite of her animated remarks about the beauty of the landscape, at a low ebb.

"I'm awfully afraid that I am detaining you," she murmured.

"Oh, not in the least—not *now*," replied March, with the levity born of final despair, and wondering if she was laughing at him. They were fully five minutes behind the field now!

"Then let's have a good long rest, for I'm really worn out, and the view here is simply divine!"

March stopped short and looked at her. But no, she was not laughing at him. The creature was in dead earnest.

"Oh, I say, you know, you can't show the white feather just yet, really! You'll feel better presently—always do after being in the saddle a while, you know," argued March, contemplating immediate desertion if she refused.

So they meandered along, and in due time reached the ford, which they crossed in a way that made March feel as though they had let little Fordy follow the hunt on his Shetland pony, and even Mephisto showed his liking for comic opera situations by actually lowering his head and attempting to drink in midstream—while being ridden to hounds! Another five minutes gone!

But on the top of the hill light broke. From that coign of vantage March instantly saw that a great possibility was developing, and, very much to Diana's bewilderment, his attitude toward her and toward life in general underwent a sudden and expansive change for the better.

"The view *is* glorious from this point, is it not?" he said, drawing rein and pointing to the sky line of ragged, purple hills.

Now that she was no longer a menace to his reputation, the girl, who had tied her hat to the wrist of her whip hand, and now sat a queen with her wavy, chestnut hair gleaming in the October sunshine and drinking in the beauty of the view, became an object of intense interest to March. They chatted on right joyfully, she little by little revealing a mind sparkling and broad and singularly to his liking, and he, in turn, surprising her by his miraculous change of manner.

"If she only could ride!" thought March.

"If this lucid interval could only last, the man might make me believe him something more than an upper groom," thought she.

Five minutes they talked thus on the hilltop, but the M. F. H. had not forgotten his responsibilities. Far from it! He viewed the scenery not with an eye single; in fact, half the time he did not view it with a single eye, for both his eyes were kept exceedingly busy watching the tantalizingly slow verification of the hypothesis which his expert mind had evolved with his first look from the ridge.

The fox had doubled, and March realized that one of two only possible courses now lay open to Reynard: he must either court almost certain death by essaying the two-mile dash across open country above the mill, or—what he would be sure to do—he must turn down stream on being stopped by the river, and, in this last event, after a short bit of boggy open, he might get to the shelter of the pussy willows and so get off into the rocky ridges beyond the Denslow meadows. This meant that the field, at present over two miles above the dam, would be drawn down the valley, bringing it, of course, to a point nearly abreast of the place where he and Maria's daughter were now discussing Balzac. Such was his desperately-hoped-for solution, for through it he might yet be in the running—save the mark!—and in at the death, while Miss Merrill's spill and his consequent delay would cover the ugly point of his absence during the first quarter of an hour.

More than once March gave up hope, for the hounds evidently had got thrown off in the swampy stretch near the bend in the river below the mill pond, and then, too, the intervening rolling country shut off all view of what was doing for two terrible, fateful minutes. But at last, just as he had supposed would happen, the whole pack suddenly broke from behind the pussy willows, and in another minute one, two, then half a dozen pink streaks flashed across the bit of clearing and plunged again into the thickets near Cobble Hill quarry.

It was now or never!

Only a half mile, and he could be at the head of the hunt! Only a half a mile—but over as villainous a bit of country as ever offered an early grave to madness. March ran the hazards over in his mind—three stiff fences, one of them a ruinous stone rampart with the nasty cobblestones scattered about in the long grass on both sides of it, where Harlequin broke his leg; a four-railer with a seven-foot ditch, where Evelyn Van Cott came the cropper that had lamed her for life; and, last of all, the gehenna of a gully with overhanging banks, where nobody had ever broken anything—because nobody had ever been fool enough to fly it! Bad! Devilish! But, then,

thank Heaven, there was no wire, and where there is no wire there is hope.

The maddening music of the baying pack shook him into consciousness of the crisis. He would make a clean breast of it, and if she did not take his apology in good spirit, then she would have to take it some other way. He liked her—yes, he had come almost to feel that, if she only rode, he might like her awfully, don't you know! But just at present she was blighting all the promise of his fair young life, so he would tell her the way to reach home, promise her anything she liked by way of atonement, and make off for glory and the killing.

"Miss Merrill," he began, interrupting her remark about the inability of women novelists to portray women, "at the risk of having you think me awfully rude, I'm going to leave you. I am the master of hounds here, and——"

"Just a minute," she broke in, with a change of tone that surprised him. "You were going to say a lot of pretty things, Mr. March, which I don't deserve. If I had dreamed that I was going to spoil your day I should never have—— But, there, I don't mean that. You've been awfully good under the circumstances, you know, and—— Why, goodness! There they are now! Look! Look! Oh!"—she laid a trembling little hand on his sleeve—"do you think you might yet catch up with them?"

"That's what I was just going to say," exclaimed March, tingling with excitement as he saw the whole field sweep into view, and thrilled by the nervous grip of her hand on his arm.

"Then let us do it!" she cried, her eyes matching his in their feverish gleam, and her fingers playing impatiently with her reins.

"You couldn't!" fairly shouted March, with his look riveted on the onrushing field. "Wait here—or follow the little stream till it joins the river. The bridge is there, and the turnpike crosses it, so it's clear sailing; and now, you know, I really must——"

To his unspeakable amazement, Diana suddenly touched The Monk's flank with her whip, and before March could protest she was tearing down the hill straight for the stone fence. In a moment he was at her side, Mephisto more than willing to respond to his bidding. They flew the fence, clearing, at March's urgent suggestion, the scattered cobbles beyond it. Then another fence; then the treacherous gully, where Diana's ruse became a thing of shreds and tatters, for she took the wide jump in a way that proved that she was the best seat that March had ever known. The rest was easy.

Some seconds before the leaders broke from behind the willows, March and the now radiant and triumphant Diana, thanks to their dashing flank movement, were in the very fore of the running—and such running! The fox did just what the M. F. H. hoped, making a perilous, but luckily successful, attempt to get through the narrow funnel of the Dingle bottom; and this meant that the run was to be the glorious, straightaway, famous course to Burkett's Mill, with the kill at Chester's—a run for the whole field, too, for the fences were safe ones, not a strand of barbed wire in the whole eight miles.

What a chance for the Norbury real ones to show what was in them! And never was run more to the liking of an M. F. H. with a name to make. Ackers was leading with young Lord Arthur, while the major, as calm as ever, was seeing to it that Norbury held its own at each critical spot. Mrs. Dudley-West, moreover, was, of course, neck-and-neck with the leaders, while Peabody and young Vanderpoel—yes, and even old Craigie—were keeping the Norbury end up in great form. And now, with Diana, March found himself at the head of his cohorts—and the day was won!

"And the major tells me that Di profited so much from your instructions that she actually was in at the death," said Mrs. Craigie that night at March's dinner; whereupon the blushing M. F. H. made open confession, and they all drank the health of "Maria's daughter."

"I shall never forget my first meet," said March to Diana, when he bade her good-night.

"*Our* first meet, Mr. March—no, nor shall I. Good-night."

# THE WRATH OF MAN

By M. H. Vorse

BEFORE he could dive into the cathedral three cripples, four small boys and two widows with small babies bore down upon him, whining in that unpleasant beggar whine that is the same all the world over.

"Get out!" ejaculated John Goram. "Get away! Get away, now, that's a good woman, do!" And he gave the nearest widowed mother what he persisted in calling a ten-cent piece.

The others followed him with redoubled supplication. Several children joined the fray, whining shrilly. To these were added hawkers of every sort, men with postal cards, men with cases full of little drawers which they pulled out to show alluring ornaments of coral, of filigree. They shook handfuls of hatpins in his face, and dangled coral necklaces before him. They swarmed around him. The cripples displayed maimed arms and legs revoltingly. Pinched children with hunches in their backs stretched out skeleton palms. It seemed to poor Goram that he was sursounded by all the progeny of Lazarus, while, in contrast to all these, his own daughter, Betty—Betty, with her enormous blond pompadour, with a white chiffon veil flying from her hat; Betty, pink with dimples that refused to be downed, was saying: "Once for all, dad, is there a Giotto in this church, or isn't there? For, if there is, I'm going off—off to buy things."

Goram seized his child by the elbow and "scuttled," as he afterwards described it, into the cathedral, almost upsetting the two old women on either side of the door who droned alternately prayers and accounts of their sorrows.

He turned then to his Bædeker.

"I doubt if there is a Giotto," he said, conscientiously.

"If there is, good-by to little Betty," remarked his daughter. "Or, if there is, don't tell me; I don't mind seeing the cathedral," she added, with that broad-minded tolerance that was hers. "You go around and look at the things"—she waved a comprehensive hand—"and pick me up over there." She pointed to a chapel where a mass was in progress.

"Your Aunt Emily——" protested Mr. Goram.

"Oh, bother Aunt Emily!" replied his irreverent daughter. "I know all about her and her heathen rites! I think it's just as bad to stand with your nose pointing toward the ceiling, spoiling your eyesight and complexion glaring at Giottos for hours. I wouldn't have minded Giotto if it hadn't been for her; I can generally stand any old thing." And she swept away to the chapel to listen with an agreeable restfulness to what Mr. Goram, good, solid Congregationalist, classed under the generic term of "mummeries."

Mr. Goram lingered long in the cathedral—his nerves shrank from what he knew was lurking without—and when he finally emerged to sunshine and deformities, he made a dash down the cathedral steps and hurled himself into a cab. Betty leisurely proceeded down the steps, affably chatting in English with the throng of beggars.

"Ah, madam," Goram heard her say, "so your charming infant is just recovering from the smallpox? How original! Take this in remembrance of me. It will probably be one of my last gifts before I am smitten. Yes, my dear sir, I can see without your calling attention

to the fact that your left leg is longer than it really ought to be; but, as an intelligent man, I ask you, do you expect me to remunerate you for having your leg pulled? Oh, yes, I know one good pull deserves another," as the man, misled by the affable manner of the pretty young person, insisted.

"Betty!" bawled Goram, for already the foe was besieging his fastness of the cab.

"San Yovanny," commanded Mr. Goram, consulting a list of churches it was his intention to "do," and a minute later, as they drove up in front of the long flight of steps which leads to San Giovanni a Carbonara, he could only grasp his daughter's arm and murmur: "Good Lord!" For on that flight of steps, on the curb before it, and clustered around the church door, was apparently the same group of beggars they had left behind them at the Duomo.

"Drive on!" groaned poor Goram. "San Paul Maggery." Betty giggled.

"It's no laughing matter," protested her irate parent. "It's their damned whine I can't stand. Yes, I said *damned*. I would have said it just the same if your aunt had been here. Yes, if one of those little rascals was to come up to me and say: 'Here, you, gimme a cent!' cheerfully, I'd give him a dollar. Hanged if I wouldn't!"

Again the cab halted. Again a flight of steps—a flight of steps crowded with the enemy.

"Take me out of this!" cried out the irate Mr. Goram. "Home—Hotel d'Angleterre." And the surprised coachman drove away with one more proof to support his theory that the *forestieri* were mostly mad.

As they drove away, the street's beggars and hawkers were its only occupants—so it seemed to the poor, harrassed gentleman.

"There's only one decent beggar in all Naples," he told his daughter; and as they neared his hotel, in an embrasure of the wall sat a white-haired man, evidently a cripple. His venerable locks fell around his clean-cut, beautiful old face; before him was a little stock of pencils and odds and ends. Occasionally he lifted tired eyes, as if in prayer; but not to the people about him. He appeared absorbed in his own holy meditations, except that now and then he shot a keen glance through the crowd.

"I've been by him four times, and he never said a word to me," said Goram, gratefully. "Gad! I'll make it true for him that silence is golden."

"I like the noisy ones best," said Betty, perversely. "He looks to me like a pious old fraud."

John Goram spent the rest of his afternoon in gloomy communion with his guide books. He wrote a marginal note in his Bædeker: "Churches with flights of steps to be avoided." These guide books had many another marginal note in the fine, old-fashioned handwriting of Emily Goram, who, some years before, had seen her Italy as sternly and conscientiously, if not as vehemently, as her brother was now seeing it. She had annotated her guide book against the time for that great trip Mr. Goram intended to take with Betty. And, fearing that he would not make the most of his opportunities, she had pointed out the beauties with many admonitions, such as: "Stand long before this sublime work."

John Goram was a conscientious, systematic man—a man who "did a town in the proper manner." He was no Paris-in-three-days tourist; he settled himself in a place for twice the time allowed by Bædeker, and devoted himself to his duty. He stood on the spot where heroes had been smitten down; he looked at the martyrs' bones; he climbed towers—this he considered hygienic; he spent solemn hours in the contemplation of "old masters"; he hunted down the ancient Roman in his lair, and got out of it his own keen and peculiar joy, which came from the feeling that nothing had passed him by, and that he had gotten his money's worth. Now, for the first time, he longed to shirk his duty. He brooded over the pestiferous beggar, and shot at Betty when she arrived:

"If I went out at midnight they'd be about me so thick I couldn't beat them off with a club."

Betty was radiant. She carried in one hand the New York *Herald,* in the other a parcel containing two dozen and a half coral pins.

She ignored her father's gloom.

"I'm just beginning to understand what Aunt Emily means by the 'priceless treasure house of Italy,'" she announced. "I've been to a church where I saw just the kind of Giottos I like—they were whitewashed over by some public-spirited man. I'm getting keen for early Roman art. I take back what I said about hating the early Romans. I've gotten a 'vision of their meaning,' as Aunt Emily says. And look here, dad, at these pins! I got them for twelve cents apiece, and the man asked a franc. Won't they make darling German favors?"

Up to this Betty had been persistently "missing things." She had spoken with open disrespect about the old masters, and had thanked God at the table d'hôte in Florence that she didn't look like a Botticelli Madonna. On the other hand, she had a love for sitting in cafés and drinking violet-colored syrups. She liked to drive at fashionable times, and liked equally well the haunting of markets and crowded parts of towns, none of which things had Miss Emily Goram mentioned as a part of the "treasure house." Now this wayward daughter remarked with utmost cheerfulness:

"Yes, I'm a reformed character. Write Aunt Emily that the scales have fallen; bring on the terra-cotta statuettes! Bring on the tear bottles and the Farnese Bull! I'm going to appreciate them or die!"

Mr. Goram looked at his daughter with surprise, and wondered what was up. He had not happened to see a little paragraph in the *Herald* to the effect that certain United States cruisers had been ordered to the Mediterranean.

It was just as well that he had not, for Goram considered the army and navy a useless luxury for a great republic. In fact, it was a certain Lieutenant Westlake who had caused John Goram to give his daughter the benefit of the "priceless treasure house of Italy" a year sooner than he had planned. This young man had had the impertinence to become engaged to his daughter. And when, acting on Miss Emily Goram's suggestion, he had demanded a promise that the young people should neither see each other nor write to each other for two years, when Betty would be twenty-one, Betty had indignantly refused.

The peppery old gentleman forthwith had had an interview with Fred Westlake, and told him to consider the engagement at an end. Then he picked up his daughter and went abroad.

And it was in ignorance of the arrival of the *Alaska* that Mr. Goram made up his mind to a prolonged stay in Naples, and set his square chin squarer as he decided that he wouldn't be imposed on by a million beggars; he acquired a cane, which he shook in such a menacing fashion at the invading hordes that every day trembling hags prayed he would die unshriven.

The beggar across the way, however, never once asked for coppers. He only continued to look heavenward, as one wrapped in prayer. His intelligent brown eyes looked sad and piteous. His mouth had a sweet expression like that of one who had suffered long, and had borne the suffering with nobility.

John Goram, going to and fro about his business—for his sight-seeing could be described by no other name—recognized him gratefully as the only beggar who had remained aloof upon the day of his first encounter with the enemy. For gratitude's sake, he dropped in the man's hat not a "ten-cent piece," but a whole lira.

Poor Betty accompanied her father dutifully. To his vast surprise, she indeed seemed converted.

She listened to Aunt Emily's marginal notes. She no longer distressed her father by insisting on spending time in unsavory parts of the town. Her one refuge and comfort at this time was the Vetors, old friends of the Gorams, who were spending some time in Naples.

"I'm going to stay here until that boat comes, unless I die a premature death of Pompeiitis," she confided to Sally Vetor. "I'll teach Aunt Emily to pack me off on two weeks' notice. If Fred had been

an idiot in queer clothes, who gibbered about Giotto, she'd have had me married by now," she added, bitterly.

And on his arrival at Gibraltar, Fred Westlake received a pathetic letter from Betty. "There are easier ways of sacrificing one's life for one's friends than deaths from terra-cotta statuettes and churches," she wrote. "And, what's more, they're giving out; there aren't any left. Mr. Goram and his talented daughter, Betty, who feels each day more like the learned pig, are leaving Naples soon; so hurry up!"

If you spend ever so long over each masterpiece, you cannot remain in a town forever; and at the last desperate moment fate intervened. As Betty told her father afterwards: "I always knew some of those curses would take. Curses aren't wholesome."

She came in one day, triumphant. "Ah, ha!" said she. "I told you so! I always said that the pencil beggar was a fraud. Mrs. Vetor says he's the worst scoundrel in all Naples. He's rich! He's a usurer! I've always wanted to see one. I always said he looked like *something*. He lends money on furniture, and then he takes it all away—the furniture, I mean—and turns babies and old women out in the street. Mrs. Vetor's in charity work, and knows all about it. He's notorious!"

Mr. Goram was a just man; he also hated being taken in, and the two things together made him angrier than he had been while he was in Naples, and that was saying a good deal. The next minute he put on his hat, and soon might have been seen the extraordinary sight of a pink-faced American gentleman with stubby white hair telling a saintly-looking Italian beggar just what he thought of him.

"He can't understand a word you say," remonstrated Betty, who was struggling with unseemly laughter.

"Oh, yes, he does!" said Goram.

And, as he watched Mr. Goram out of sight, the beggar uttered long, vindictive curses in his melodious voice.

A day or two after this, Betty appeared at Mrs. Vetor's, a legal document in her hand.

"Dad's waiting in a cab. We're going to do the catacombs. This is in Italian, and it's legal, and he thought I'd better find out just what it means," she said, wearily.

Mrs. Vetor looked it over carefully.

"Why, my dear, this is most extraordinary! It's from that awful man I told you about—the usurer who begs, you know. He sues your father for two hundred and fifty lire, which he says he lent him."

Betty sank on the sofa in helpless mirth. "Oh, support me to the carriage!" she cried. "Oh, my poor, dear father! Why, Mrs. Vetor, I'm afraid he'll explode into little hot pieces when he hears this!"

"A lawsuit in Italy is apt to be a tedious affair, unless your father wants to pay——"

"Which he never will," said Betty.

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Vetor, "it may be *weeks* before you get it off your hands; and your father told me the other day that you were about through with Naples."

"'He maketh the wrath of men to praise Him,'" quoted Betty, enigmatically.

Mrs. Vetor stared.

Betty viewed her father's fury philosophically. It was with satisfaction that she accompanied him from the consul's to a lawyer who spoke English.

"Of course," said the lawyer, politely, "you will prefer to effect a compromise. The rascal will probably accept a half—perhaps less."

"It's a mere matter of twenty dollars or so, dad, and you know we've finished Naples nearly," said Betty, with profound duplicity.

Then it was that Mr. Goram exploded as his daughter prophesied he would.

"Pay!" he bawled. "Pay that scoundrel, and let him batten on his ill-gotten gains! No, sirree! I'll spend that, and twice that, if I've got to!" And he shook a letter of credit with a formidable figure on it in the astonished lawyer's face. "I'll sit here in this hole all my days—I'll *die* here; but I'll beat that man!"

"Ah! in that case, leave all to me," said the lawyer. "You Americans are

generally in a hurry, and I warn you that it may cost more than the sum you are being sued for."

"I don't care what it costs," said Goram, recklessly.

"But you will beat that old scoundrel for my father, won't you?" pleaded Betty, with a dazzling smile. In her active brain a new idea had sprung.

"Indeed I will, Miss Goram. I am delighted to be of service to you."

"I thought, when I saw you, we could count on you," pursued Betty, carefully avoiding her father's scowl. "And my father and I would love to see you at our hotel to thank you for your kindness."

"Yes, delighted, I'm sure," agreed Mr. Goram, with a brave attempt at civility.

"How handsome the Italians are!" said Betty, as they drove away. "All clouds have their silver linings, if you know how to look for them. Now, we would never have met that agreeable lawyer man if it hadn't been for your misfortune."

"I dislike all Dagoes," commented Mr. Goram.

"They live in a 'classic land,'" quoted Betty.

"A classic pickpockets' nest!" returned her father.

The time which followed, Mr. Goram always looked back upon as a nightmare. A time spent in hotel smoking rooms, listening to ghastly tales concerning the dishonesty of the Neapolitans, tales about pocket-picking and trunk robbing, custom house extortions, and, above all, stories that had to do with the routing of foreigners who unfortunately came into contact with Neapolitan law courts.

Nor was Mr. Goram's daughter a comfort to him. She "backslid" the very day her father was sued. She threw the ancient Romans overboard with a lightness that was indecent. *"Now,"* she informed her father, "I'm going to see *Naples.*"

"We've seen Naples a little more thoroughly than I'd planned already," said her father, grimly.

"We've *done* Naples—done it to a brown crisp—but we haven't seen it," corrected his daughter. "I think Europe might be fun if we could get at it. Whenever I think of Europe, I see a place with an impenetrable wall of museums on one side, and cathedrals on the other, and heaps of Americans surging into them. It jars me!"

"Your diction is ornate," remarked Mr. Goram, with ill humor.

"Yes, I got 'impenetrable wall' from Aunt Emily," replied Betty, serenely. "I think it's *chic.* Now I'm going in for the life of the people, and the life of the people in Naples is the lottery. I just love lotteries! See here!" And Betty held up a handful of tickets on which were numbers.

Mr. Goram sank back limp in his chair. The last straw, he thought, had been piled on. But he had to learn that there are worse things than lotteries. The advocate, Signor Bogliolo, accepted their invitation and called at the hotel. He called often. There were many points on which Mr. Goram was to be consulted. Now Mr. Goram had been coached about the Latin races.

Miss Emily Goram wrote many letters in the following strain:

> And whatever you do, *never* leave Betty a second alone with an Italian or a Frenchman. Never leave her alone with any foreigner. Don't let her even meet one if you can avoid it. That is one of the drawbacks of travel—one is forced to meet foreigners often if one is not careful. And a girl of Betty's light disposition and her large fortune is just the kind of girl to be taken in. Follow my advice carefully, or you will live to regret Frederick Westlake!

And poor Mr. Goram, as he doggedly chaperoned his daughter and "that Dago," as he termed his lawyer, felt his sister was right.

The more so, as Betty would drop consoling remarks such as: "I adore Naples. I should love to spend my days here. It's a glorious spot for German favors." Or, "How much better manners the Italians have than we, and I do think Signor Bogliolo is too handsome for anything."

"Yes; I should call him sweetly pretty," assent from Mr. Goram.

His lawsuit worried him, too; for he could get no account of the method his lawyer intended to employ in his defense.

"Leave it all to me," the advocate would say. "Evil must be fought with its own weapons." Which was highly satisfactory to a gentleman accustomed to conduct his own affairs.

The trial lagged, nor was Signor Bogliolo anxious to have it come on. He was a kindly little man, a good lawyer, with an abiding wonder at the peculiarities of Americans. But Betty was pretty, the daughter of a very rich man, and her attitude was distinctly encouraging. It is not unlikely that he thought that a course of an old-fashioned mother-in-law, the kind he could provide, would improve the young lady.

"I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself, Betty Goram," Mrs. Vetor remonstrated, "to bother your poor father so! To say nothing of leading on this poor man, who seems a nice fellow."

"If you had an Aunt Emily you'd worry your father," said Betty, with pathos. "Besides, this keeps his mind off. He'd have murdered that beggar man before now if it hadn't been for me!"

If you are from the upper part of the State of New York, the story of the trial will be an old one. For John Goram has told it at most public dinners and all other occasions, when he could, for the last eight years. It has furnished him with an inexhaustible topic of conversation, if getting purple and pounding a table, as one pounds out the tale of one's misfortunes, can be called conversation.

Mr. Goram's version was interspersed with much picturesque abuse of the Italian nation, but there was a bitterness in that trial which he never got over. He had not only been humbugged, but he, for a short moment of his spotless life, had been a humbug as well. A battle had been fought, evil had been met with evil, and guile with guile; and this vicarious humbugging, that he had been an innocent party to, left its stain on him in his own eyes.

Mr. Goram's account of the trial has become unwieldy with the years. It has taken girth and bulk, and stands out massive and huge, a menace to every dinner that its owner attends. For it has acquired a certain personality of its own, and one thinks of this story as a tangible object belonging to Mr. Goram. It includes elaborate descriptions of the Italian courts of law. It is at once Mr. Goram's confession of faith, and his apologies.

However, I prefer Betty's condensed version as it came fresh from the mint, when it was as yet new-born, so to speak, and had expanded to no such alarming proportions as it afterwards took.

She flew into Mrs. Vetor's like a bird. Her blond hair shone like a halo, her inevitable white veil fluttered about her.

"We've won!" she exulted. "We've won; but dad's heart is broken, and he'll never get over it. He's laying for poor Signor Bogliolo now. Papa doesn't understand the Italians the way I do; and, Mrs. Vetor, the *Alaska* will be in to-night. Oh, I wish Aunt Emily was here!"

Mrs. Vetor knew better than to interrupt Betty, who seated herself pertly on the edge of a large desk, and swung her heels.

"You would have admired the beggar man; he made a lovely favorable contrast to poor dad. The old man looked like an ivory saint, and dad was purple. You don't know what a responsibility a purple parent is, Sally. Your mother never gets purple, nor sits in a court room gripping her cane till her veins stand out on her forehead, and looking as if she wanted to kill her adversary.

"Life has been hard on me lately, I can tell you. I'm perfectly sure that dad would have paid that man the fifty dollars for the privilege of thrashing him. As it is, it will be for Signor Bogliolo. He will catch it, and I'm awfully afraid he'll come to propose to-night."

"You little wretch!" said Sally Vetor.

"But why is your father so angry, if he's won?" asked Mrs. Vetor.

"Well, that's what I'm explaining," said Betty, fanning herself. "You see, it was about the witnesses. There was

lots of talk and talk, but I was so nervous about dad I didn't pay much attention until the interpreter man told us what the witnesses were saying. They were three, and they wore black clothes; they got up and swore that they'd seen small financial transactions going on between the plaintiff and the defendant for some time. Poor papa had generally 'transacted' him twenty cents a day—and that one day they were called as witnesses, when dad had borrowed the money. That was a trying moment for a daughter, Mrs. Vetor. It's not pleasant to believe one's father is going to have apoplexy in a court room in a strange land. Heaven knows what he'd have had to pay for contempt of court, if he had!

"Well, my dear, our clever lawyer never asked the witnesses a question. All he did was to ask if that was all our opponents had to say, and the lawyer on the other side said, 'Yes.'

"It was the most exciting thing! I thought, 'Sold again!' for a moment.

"Then, Mrs. Vetor, it was *our* innings. There came forward four solemn men dressed in black—beautifully dressed—lots and lots more impressive than the beggar's witnesses."

Here Betty lowered her voice to a dramatic whisper.

"Mrs. Vetor, *those men swore they had seen dad pay the money he had borrowed!*"

She paused to let the enormity of this sink in.

"You never saw a sadder sight," she continued, with a touch of seriousness. "Poor dad 'most collapsed. No one can understand what an awful thing this is for him. He'll fix Aunt Emily for talking 'treasure house' to him! He got pale—for the first time in his life. You know he always stayed just the color he was born. I took him home, and I'm keeping him on ice. He sat with his head on his hands, saying: 'They said they saw me pay it back! They said they saw me pay it back!' Oh, you can laugh. It wasn't so funny for poor dad. Though I was proud of our stylish witnesses. Dad says he's a broken man, but I'm glad, all the same, I'm not Signor Bogliolo. And the *Alaska* must be in by now, and I must get home to *break Fred Westlake to dad gently.*"

That evening two cards were handed in at the Gorams'.

Betty handed Signor Bogliolo's to her father. "He's come for you, of course. I think he'll probably propose to you—for me, I mean. He conducted our case so splendidly," she observed. "And here's Fred Westlake's card. I suppose I'd better not see him. It wouldn't do to annoy Aunt Emily."

John Goram pulled himself together. He reverted to his own type, the type of the autocratic English father of a century ago. He shook himself free forever from his Sister Emily's ideas.

"I'll settle with Signor Bogliolo, and you'll see Fred Westlake," he thundered. "What's more, if he asks you to marry him, you accept him. You hear *me!* I'll have no more nonsense. He's a manly-looking fellow, and I dare say the navy is merely a youthful folly. Besides, he's an American. You come back to this room engaged!"

Betty twisted a certain ring she had omitted to return to Fred Westlake when the engagement was broken. She looked the picture of meek daughterly obedience. "Yes, dad; I'll come back—engaged," she said.

# The Social Side of New Orleans*

IN WHICH A LEADER OF SOCIETY
TELLS THE TRUTH ABOUT IT

A NORTHERN man once said that as soon as you are introduced to a Southerner he begins to tell you who his grandfather was; so it will be characteristically Southern to commence the story of New Orleans society with some reference to its ancestry. In fact, it would be hardly possible to understand its present without taking its past into consideration.

New Orleans is emphatically a city with a past, and if it is argued that other cities also have pasts, it may be replied that there is still a difference. So much of the romantic and picturesque mingle in the story of New Orleans' bygone days—stately traditions of love and war, echoes of the courts of Spain and France, courtly manners of the Old World transplanted to the New. There are in circulation hundreds of stories—not inscribed on the historic page, but transmitted by word of mouth—in which sentiment plays the leading part, embodying all imaginable complications of love, tales of noble ladies who died of broken hearts, and cavaliers who measured swords beneath the great oaks of the old dueling ground. Names sonorous and melodious resound through these old-time *contes*, and the undernote is the silken rustle of brocades, the whisper of dainty fans wielded by "beauties that Fragonard drew"—or might have drawn. This little "wilderness company" brought to the tangled forests and untilled fields of the New World all its pride of rank, and a novelist of New Orleans was not drawing from her imagination, but from fact, when she described the miniature court of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, "that Little Versailles in the heart of a wilderness, for whose splendors and ceremonies he was so jealous."

Stern Puritans, God-fearing Quakers, rugged pioneers, made history in another fashion, but not more effectually than these men who laughed and wooed and danced and fought with equal gusto.

Favorable as the natural situation of the city was, from a commercial standpoint, there were still the counterbalancing disadvantages of an enervating climate, the capricious encroachments of the vast and mutable river, and a soil so unreliable that, to-day, piles many feet long must be driven in order to erect the tall buildings which modern conditions have made necessary. Actually situated in a quaking morass, the New Orleans of the present day is a splendid monument to the men whose courage and tenacity made its birth and growth possible.

Though, in progress and enterprise, New Orleans is at present a thoroughly American city, it is interesting to note how persistent is the influence of those races which the learned now tell us we must not call Latin, but which we have

* This is the fifth in a series of important articles on social life in American cities to be published in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE throughout the present year. Articles on the social side of New York, Boston, St. Louis and Philadelphia have appeared respectively in the June, July, August and September numbers. Articles of a similar nature will be published on Chicago and San Francisco.—THE EDITORS.

to continue calling so for the sake of convenience. Or, rather, the influence is French, and, in a much slighter degree, Spanish; and this is shown in a hundred different ways in the manners and customs of the people, and even in their speech. Thus we find persons who do not speak French using French idioms. As the English-speaking Canadians like to be mistaken for natives of England, so the Creoles of New Orleans like to be told that they are more like French people than Creoles; and visiting foreigners know this weakness and flatter it. Cultivated and traveled Creoles smile among themselves at another class whose French speech is full of singing intonations and colloquialisms, and have invented mocking nicknames to describe these home-staying folk with the correspondingly homely wits.

New Orleans society is the child of its past, and unconsciously, or only half consciously, it lives up to its gallant traditions. There is a less prosaic way of looking at life than the worldly-wise would commend, and not a few improvident matches are made; but they usually turn out as well as if planned by prudence. The impoverishment which followed the Civil War is still recent enough to keep narrow means from seeming the disgrace they are considered in the North. Still, it can be understood that this phase will soon pass, and when it has vanished utterly it is possible that Southerners, like Northerners, will look upon wealth as the great desideratum and poverty as the unspeakable bugbear. At present money is not absolutely indispensable in a social career, and the one who lacks it need not necessarily figure only as a hanger-on of richer persons. So many of the "first families" were beggared by the war that poverty is not inevitably associated with lowly birth and humble position.

One sharp-tongued woman declared that the legend of war losses is "worked" by many who had nothing to lose—whose fathers, perhaps, "overseed" for some aristocratic planter. "That claim is almost outlawed now," she said, "and pretty soon people will have to invent some other excuse for having no money."

If one were asked to name the prevailing note of New Orleans society, one would say—amiability. Far be it from me to insinuate that New Orleanians are more than human, and never gossip or backbite, or talk scandal about each other. But in social intercourse they are undeniably pleasant. One might say that French influence is again at work in this—the habit of saying pretty things prettily and doing little graceful courtesies has been acquired and not forgotten.

A bluff dame from elsewhere was inclined to pooh-pooh all these civilities, and averred that there was more vanity than real amiability in New Orleans society. "Most of it is vanity," she declared. "They make me think of a lot of children who want the strangers to admire how prettily they play together. They think 'the eyes of Europe are upon them,' and they are bent on keeping up the sectional reputation for grace and pleasantness." This unflattering critic pointed out that the gambolings of Madame Chose were clearly intended to represent "the charming vivacity of the Latin races," while the odalisque airs of Mrs. Blank were supposed to be "seductive Southern languor." . . . "It seems to me a good deal of play-acting goes on," she added. "I suppose a philosopher would call it the dramatic instinct of the Southern temperament."

All the same, it is pleasanter, socially, to be patted than scratched, and if sincerity is manifested by showing the claws, let us have a little dissimulation.

With so many titles and high-sounding names in the background of its history, New Orleans, unlike the grand old gardener and his wife, does not "smile at the claims of long descent." So far is it otherwise that these claims are asserted by some who have no right to them, in the endeavor to conform to such social ideals. Like the war impoverishment, perhaps this also is a passing phase; for the influx of strangers without producible ancestors has lowered the standard, and will doubtless do so more and more. The after-the-war saying,

"Bottom rail's on top now," is highly applicable in many cases.

Some of the old families seem to have almost reached the vanishing point as regards looks, brains and wealth; but there are others whose pride never fell with their fortunes; who continued to hold their heads high, not in stupid arrogance, but in dignity, and established their claim to that aristocracy of character which prevails over adverse circumstances and wrests success from seeming ruin.

New Orleans fortunes, of course, scarcely rank with those of the North and West; and even among the richest, while there is luxury, there is no great ostentation. One of the wealthiest men of the city keeps no carriage, preferring to use hired vehicles; his individual reason being a disinclination to cope with the inconveniences entailed by inefficient coachmen, whose failings ranged from drunkenness to absolute ignorance of their business. A visitor from Chicago was struck by the absence of those rows of handsome private equipages which may be seen daily in front of the principal shops in that city. Several reasons help to account for this—badly paved streets, ill-trained service, and the fact that the rich actually spend a very short time in their city homes, the hot weather dispersing them promptly northward, or to Europe, or to their over-the-lake villas.

Naturally, it is easier for the alien to get into society than for the native who was not "born in," for severer tests are always applied to the latter. The stranger's coal-heaving grandfather and washerwoman grandmother may be suspected or surmised; but they are not horrid facts known to the irrepressible Old Inhabitant. A single introduction may be an entering wedge that will open everything before a stranger; whereas a native has often to struggle long and arduously, and sometimes fruitlessly, for the same end.

Stony and thorny was the pathway of one aspirant who possessed both beauty and money in abundance, but neither tact nor magnetism. The vulgar expression, "butting in," might have been specially invented to describe her social tactics. She tried to enter society like a battering-ram; but in vain she gave elaborate entertainments which suggested the advance agent's phrase, "introducing many new features." She never reached more than the social fringe. Ridiculous stories were circulated about her want of tact, which, if not true, were at least so characteristic that everyone believed them. On the other hand, there was the social success of a woman who had not beauty or money or aristocratic birth, but only cleverness and tact and amiability: the "best people" thronged to the simple receptions at her shabby, old-fashioned house, got jammed on the corkscrew staircase, and, by their numbers, actually endangered the shaky old floors.

New Orleans receives visiting strangers cordially, with this proviso: they must be likable—and responsive. New Orleans smiles welcome at you, but you must smile back. The lions of literature and art, when they stray hither, are much made of socially, though many who listen reverentially to their talented roarings may be vague as to the nature of their achievements.

New Orleans society has the provincial characteristic of distrusting its prophets until the seal of success has been set upon their work by—let us say, New York. (But is not New York itself equally provincial in its attitude towards London and Paris?) One local light was almost ignored until her return from a literary center where she had won fame; but, being good-natured, or cynical, she accepted the change of attitude without grimaces.

New Orleans originates nothing. Another provincial trait is the way it "plays the sedulous ape" to Northern cities, whence it derives its ideas about kirmesses, flower parades, automobile processions, country clubs, etc., being, in its turn, aped by the surrounding towns. No; New Orleans has invented nothing —nor even Mardi Gras, which it borrowed from Paris—or, rather, which is still stranger, from Mobile, where the first Mardi Gras celebration of this country was held. However, it is only

just to say that New Orleans has added features which entitle the *festa* to rank as a local product.

Topographically, New Orleans has no diversity of landscape to lend it picturesqueness; in so flat a country the natural beauties are floral and arborical. This wave-girdled town, clasped in the arms of lake and river, makes the impression of a summer city of pleasure, and many of the coquettish houses of the "garden district" seem like gay-colored tents spread only for a holiday season—the flowering time when banana fronds are springing tall and green, when the mimosa and magnolia are in blossom, and the crêpe myrtle trees hang upon the sunshiny air like clouds of rosy bloom. Yet New Orleans has not such a far-Southern look as, for instance, Savannah, Georgia, where the many palms that shake their spiky crowns along the sidewalks give the little city a decidedly tropic air. The majestic beauty of New Orleans' live oaks is proverbial, but still the town is not so well wooded as one might expect; the trees having been subjected to a thinning-out process in bygone years, in deference to a theory that foliage attracts mosquitoes.

A local peculiarity of New Orleans is that society is all over the city "in spots." The T. F. U. T. taunt, applied in Philadelphia to the wretched dwellers north of Market Street, would be meaningless here, where there are uptown and downtown social elements that mingle as one. The rich Jews—but socially they scarcely count—prefer the uptown quarter; and many of the handsomer houses on St. Charles Avenue belong to them.

In a handful of generalizations such as this, one must necessarily do injustice to individuals. As regards the arts, there are New Orleanians capable of producing and appreciating the best. One social light is more than commonly talented, both as a musician and a painter, and his studio is an expression of exquisite taste. Music and painting have their gifted expositors, and some of the Newcomb pottery which has won international recognition has been decorated by delicate hands—"the hand of small employment." But, on the whole, one cannot aver that the feeling for the arts is very deep or earnest.

On the strength of the "standing opera troupe" the city poses as a community of virtuosos; the truth being that they like music which appeals to the emotions, and to this they are as responsive as æolian harps to the touch of the wind. But they do not care for music of the highest order any more than for lectures. By reason of a certain volatility of temperament, they feel the need of being amused, touched, thrilled, but not instructed. The French opera company is an institution dear to their hearts; they take pride in it, and regard it as a pleasant social function. Many of the *habitués* know every note of the operas that have been given year after year; for, though the manager endeavors to produce a few novelties each season, the heavy old stand-bys, "La Juive," "Les Huguenots," "L'Africaine," "Guillaume Tell," etc., appear with unfailing regularity. One steady opera-goer declares that the three Anabaptists in "Le Prophète" have become to him a burden too grievous to be borne; but his soul will not be afflicted thus in the season of 1904-5, for the "standing opera troupe" will be replaced by a French vaudeville company. New Orleans will miss the behind-the-scenes comedy of the French opera which was enacted each year with few variations: the struggle of two warring factions—one for the impresario, and the other against him; minor squabbles of that dignitary with his "artists" and *corps de ballet;* wails of the manager over the money he avows he has lost in the venture; and a closing chorus of shrieks from the troupe, who depart discontented about everything. At the close of the past opera season there was a praiseworthy attempt to accustom the public to a more serious class of music, but it languished, the time not yet being ripe for such ventures. New Orleans' Academy of Fine Arts and Conservatory of Music are still in the future.

The New Orleans woman of society is not much of a club woman, except as regards literary clubs. Southern people generally have not been celebrated for

their intellectuality; but there has been a sort of literary awakening here during the past fifteen or twenty years, and the papers read at some of the clubs show that serious study is done. There were weird stories told about the infancy of one of these coteries in years agone. The leaders knew their way about among the labyrinths of literature, but some of the followers went sadly astray. One lady, during a course of Shakespearean study, was heard to complain that there was nothing "cute" about "Timon of Athens," and another confused Thomas à Kempis with Thomas Aquinas. But they know better now.

Society is only mildly athletic—that is, as athletic as the debilitating climate permits. The bad roads around New Orleans discourage horseback riding, but when the bicycle mania swept over the country society "biked" arduously, if not with enjoyment. But it was a fad which passed sooner here than elsewhere. Like the students of Northern colleges, the Newcomb girls play basket-ball enthusiastically; tennis has its adherents, and the golf links at Audubon Park and the new Country Club near City Park are not left vacant. Undoubtedly something of the popularity of golf is due to the English colony of "cotton men," who cannot live without out-of-door sports.

Socially, New Orleans is a paradise for these Englishmen, where they are cordially received—and it may be remarked that certain of them are thus admitted to a society of which they would not have the privilege in their native land. Some have married New Orleans girls, and seem quite contented to resign, figuratively, the roast beef of Old England for the gombos and ragouts of Louisiana.

It is to be suspected that the Southern fair go into athletic pursuits rather for the sake of sociability than out of pure love of sport. The New Orleans girl—the typical one—is essentially feminine and frilly and fluffy. With her mother's milk—or with the modern substitute of infants' food in a bottle—she imbibes the idea that she must look pleasing and be pleasing. Therefore she does not enjoy getting "blowsed" and making a sight of herself with tousled hair and the skin burned off the bridge of her nose. Southern men do not much care to have girls as the companions of their out-of-door sports; they want them for sweethearts, not chums. Women players are not allowed on the Audubon Park golf links at certain hours of certain days when the men go thither for earnest playing. The male players, by the by, do not attire themselves as jauntily as the Northern men do; in fact, they seem to think that any old thing in the way of clothes will serve the purpose, and their appearance is not calculated to fascinate feminine eyes.

Men who were young when the Civil War began say that the attitude of Southern men towards women has changed since those days—that the present generation are not as reverential to everything feminine as their courtly fathers were. Perhaps the difference is that the men of the past were interested in Woman, while those of the present are interested in some particular woman. But whatever mutations time has brought, the Southern man is certain of one thing—he wants a woman to be a woman. And the Southern girl knows it, and is distractingly feminine. It is here that the *charmeuse* type will be the last to become extinct. Visiting girls think that the New Orleans girl is spoiled by the men, and are astonished at the amount of *petits soins* she exacts. But the native girl knows her business; she is aware that men will usually give a woman as little as she will accept, and her attitude of expecting much is justified by results.

A distinguished college dignitary complained that "the personal note" is too evident in the conversation of the New Orleans maiden, and praised the "fine impersonality" of an intellectual Northern product. (But, all the same, he married a New Orleans girl.)

On the whole, New Orleans society is well-behaved. There is a smart set—the "spangled set," some call it—but its friskings are mild compared with those of similar cliques in vaster metropolises.

It might be said that they indulge in freedom of speech rather than freedom of action. Gossip and even scandal are talked about certain prominent people; but there are few of those *esclandres* which disrupt families. This is due rather to the women than to the men, who conduct themselves as their sex does elsewhere. The Southern woman seems to be more forgiving than her Northern sisters, and less given to seeking reprisals.

Among the Catholics the church discountenances divorce, forbids re-marriage, and counsels forbearance on the part of injured wives, thus curbing the action of jealousy among the warm-blooded races most prone to that passion. There are re-married *divorcées* in New Orleans society; but it is significant that they are almost always women from other sections, who have married men of prominence here, and thus are received. Among the New Orleanians there is many a woman who has been forced to separate from her husband, but who, though still young and charming, will not offend against the dogma of her church by forming any new tie. The New Orleans woman, though fond of pleasure, usually loves her home and babies, and "race suicide" is not prevalent.

Which are the prettier—the American girls or the Creoles? It is not easy to say. Certainly there are some glorious beauties among the latter, to say nothing of a thousand piquantly pretty faces. The Creole girl manages to be slim without being angular, and the brunettes usually have the charm of handsome eyes and fine teeth. Yet there is no monotony of type. In a Spanish Creole family the eldest daughter is a golden blonde with eyes of somber blue, and the hair of the others ranges from sunny chestnut to deepest black. A French Creole girl, milky fair, with blond *cendré* locks and clear, gray eyes, is as pretty as a white kitten—in fact, she suggests the fairy-tale princess who was transformed into a white cat.

But the hand about to extend the palm of beauty to the Creole will falter at sight of this young American, nobly built, with a face of rosy health and sweetness, or yonder youthful matron with the figure of a nymph, dreaming eyes of periwinkle blue, and hair in such splendid abundance as golden tresses do not usually display.

The New Orleans woman is prettiest in the filmy summer gowns, which allow full sway for her graceful feminine fancy; or in evening dress—not because she is addicted to cosmetics and needs an artificial light to flatter her, but because here again is a situation in which her femininity may assert itself. Strangers, as a rule, grow enthusiastic over the tiers of charming faces in the horseshoe curve of the balcony of the grim old Opera House on Bourbon Street. Not so many diamond necklaces and tiaras, perhaps, as at the Metropolitan—but what jewel-like eyes!

The dream of the popular débutante is to wind up her first season by being crowned Queen of the Carnival. It is not too much to say that this hope haunts the mind of every really pretty girl, and doubtless the devout Catholic maidens make novenas and stand St. Joseph on his head to this end. The lesser glory of being maid of honor is open to the friends of the queen. The increased number of Carnival organizations offer more chances for queenship than existed of old; but, of course, the great honor is to be chosen as the royal lady who shall share the throne of Rex.

Long ago, in one of the earlier celebrations, a handsome matron was made Queen of the Carnival; but now maidens only are considered eligible, and a beautiful married woman, to whom social recognition had come with marriage, openly lamented, as an irreparable loss, that this glory could never be hers.

When one sees the robes of regal splendor worn by the chosen girl, one realizes what this brief reign means to the feminine heart in New Orleans. A witty grandmother wrote to her grandson, who had just been blessed with his third daughter during a space of four years, this prognostication of the social labors ahead of him: "Three girls 'out' at once, and Mabel's"—the eldest—"queen's

robe being made!" A little girl from a neighboring town was so impressed by these Carnival royalties that she asked, in an awestruck tone: "Aunt, do you think, if I should be very, very good, I could ever get to be Queen of the Carnival?"

High character is essential, but the crown is not a prize of virtue, nor even always a prize of beauty; for, though some famous beauties have been chosen, other reasons enter into the choice. Position and popularity count for much; but here, as in other human events, there are times when "all signs fail"; and there was at least one queen who made the public speculate as to how she gained her hour of royalty.

In a street car a Western woman, with all the snarling r's of her section, was heard referring to New Orleans as "this devilish burg." But few strangers are of her opinion. Undoubtedly the old city exercises some charm which causes it to be beloved in spite of its unspeakable gutters, pestiferous mosquitoes and tropical torrents that transform the streets into lakes. It is a social Mecca towards which the eyes of the young officers of American and foreign warships turn yearningly. They long to come hither, and, having come once, they long to return.

Society here is pleasant because it has not yet become unwieldy and thus grown to be an "engine of oppression." People still have time for friendship, and do not hasten from dissipation to dissipation in that restless state of friendlessness to which the poor plutocrats of New York are doomed—if we may believe writers who describe its social phenomena. The likable stranger sees that he is regretted when he leaves New Orleans, and when he returns he finds he is remembered.

The social season is brief, being compressed into a few months, and culminating at Mardi Gras in a coruscation of festivities. New Orleans is never so typically New Orleans as at Mardi Gras, when it is *en fête*, swept and garnished—for, like a slovenly housekeeper, it "cleans up" chiefly when company is expected—and with its banners hanging on the outer wall. It is really "the world turned upside down" for a few days.

"Everything goes" at Carnival, and delays and accidents that would seem maddening at other seasons are now taken with laughing philosophy. Households are temporarily disorganized, servants share in the general excitement, meals are at every hour or no hour, and it is to be suspected that frisky husbands sometimes use their connection with various Carnival organizations as an excuse for absences from home. One of these public-spirited citizens fell into the habit of wagging his handsome head sadly, with the air of an overburdened man, as he sighed, sadly: "Ah, Nina! *dans ce temps de Carnaval!*" The remark was at first received respectfully, but familiarity bred contempt, and the speaker was startled by a peal of laughter from the assembled family; whereupon a guilty but appreciative grin appeared upon his countenance.

To the average New Orleanian a bit of pleasure is like so much money in his pocket. Strangers wonder at the amiability of those tremendous Mardi Gras crowds which suggest such terrific possibilities of riot and panic; but the truth is, pleasure is so pleasing to the native that he would not dream of going out on a holiday to shove and squabble.

Mardi Gras weather is as proverbial as queen's weather, and sunshine and blue sky rarely fail the festival, the clouds retaining their tears until Ash Wednesday. And if everyone is not happy, at least everyone looks so for the hour. From the dainty ladies banked upon the club balconies to the vast crowds in the street, where bands of make-believe Indians disport themselves, and numberless little boys, with strange self-knowledge, are garbed and masked as monkeys and devils, all seem to smile, all turn bright faces towards the coming king—towards the passing festival—towards the Lenten ashes of the morrow.

# AN EDITORIAL

## AN APPRECIATION AND A SYNOPSIS OF "THE HEART OF LADY ANNE"

There are no writers of fiction at present who have any just claim to a share in the position occupied by Agnes and Egerton Castle, for they have made for themselves a name and reputation in contemporary literature that is conspicuous in its isolation. So significant is this fact that we are almost tempted to make use of a phrase, which to us ordinarily has little meaning, namely, that they have created a new school of fiction.

It is true that they have not achieved anything absolutely original—which is but another way of saying they have not compassed the impossible—and they may perhaps have introduced to us Lady Betty Modish, Peggy Thrift and Peg Woffington under other names. They have at any rate recast these attractive characters and their contemporaries with no loss of their attractiveness and surrounded them with a more charming and more wholesome atmosphere, with no loss, and perhaps even a gain, of vitality.

The heroine of "The Heart of Lady Anne," the first part of which appeared in the September number of Ainslee's, is, to our way of thinking, a new and important character in fiction. She will undoubtedly suggest to the initiated some old literary friends, but it is not to be denied that she possesses a distinct individuality of her own which will make her doings and sayings as strongly typical as those of many of her famous predecessors. The development of her character from that of a charming, inexperienced, vivacious, spoiled and somewhat selfish child, through the purging influence of more or less bitter and humiliating experiences, is as thoroughly artistic a piece of literature as has appeared in a long time.

The action of the story belongs to the period of "The Bath Comedy," and the scene is in London and at Queen's Compton, the home of Sir Philip Day, in Oxfordshire. Sir Philip has, but a few months prior to the opening of the narrative, brought home his young wife, the daughter of an English earl and a French mother. She had been educated in France in the seclusion characteristic of the education of French girls, with no knowledge of the world and its pleasures. The sudden change in her condition, as the wife of an Englishman, relieved of the restraints to which she had been subjected, naturally imparted to her a sense of freedom and independence and a longing to see something of life which chafes against the, to her dull, atmosphere of her husband's beautiful old home. She therefore begs to be permitted to accept the invitation of her friend, Lady Kilcroney (Sweet Kitty Bellairs), so well-known in "The Bath Comedy," "The Incomparable Bellairs," and the play "Sweet Kitty Bellairs." Her husband, to whom her mood is incomprehensible, absolutely refuses to give his consent, and in a fit of resentment, and urged by her French maid, she leaves home and goes to her father's house in London. Her unexpected arrival there is, however, so unwelcome to her family that she sends to her husband to take her home. She then renews her demand to go to Lady Kitty, and her husband yields, though it apparently opens a breach between them.

Her visit to London begins with her introduction to the fast set there.

# THE HEART OF LADY ANNE

By Agnes and Egerton Castle
Authors of "The Incomparable Bellairs," "The Secret Orchard," "The Star Dreamer," Etc.

(IN THREE PARTS. PART II.)

## CHAPTER VII.

LADY ANNE propped her flushed cheek on her hand.

"Pray," said she, plaintively, "how, then, do matters stand between us? I fear I have lost count, and, in truth, my head swims."

They were seated, Lady Anne Day and my Lord Sanquhar, at a little table somewhat apart from the others in my Lady Buckinghamshire's great, gay drawing room. The amber folds of the silk window curtain behind her threw the pearly shades of her dainty head, the faint mauve shimmer of her gown, into relief under the gleam of the four wax candles that illuminated their window corner.

Lord Sanquhar pushed the candlestick before him on one side, that he might the better gaze at his antagonist. He marked the quiver of her lip under the teeth that fain would hold it steady, the fear that dilated her eyes as she looked back at him across a formidable array of notes; and a look between tenderness and cruelty came upon his handsome, sensual countenance. He stretched out a long, thin hand and gathered the papers from before her to spread them under his own glance; ran his finger nail along them in brief calculation, then raised his eyes once more and suddenly smiled. Anne caught her breath; she scarce knew why, but his smile terrified her.

"What have I lost to you?" she whispered, leaning across.

"Oh, why should you trouble?" said he. "Such pretty heads as yours were never meant for the ugly game of figures. You owe me nothing. Nay, 'tis I owe you for many a rousing game and something else——" His voice sank. "Shall I tear up these silly bits of paper?"

Pallor and flush passed across her face almost as rapidly as the panting breath between her lips.

"Sir, my lord—nay, Lord Sanquhar, you insult me! Oh, indeed, you do me very grievous wrong if you suppose that I would accept"—her breast heaved—"that I am in need of accepting any such favor. We played for fair stakes. Before the last throw I owed you some two hundred pounds, and again I lost. I never was a good arithmetician, sir," said Nan, pride lending strength to her voice and driving away her former sense of apprehension, "but I trust that I know enough about figures not to risk more than I can pay."

"Oh, you will pay, my lady, sure enough," said Lord Sanquhar, bowing with a very deep air of courtesy across the table to her. "I crave your pardon, but such a misapprehension was far indeed from my thoughts. Shall we have it, now, that you owe me two hundred and fifty pounds? Alas, alas! why should the fates thus pursue me when I should so fain owe to you? Shall we rest on this? You are tired."

Nan pressed her fingers over her eyes for a second. It seemed to her that these ten days since she had taken up her abode with Lady Kilcroney were

like nothing on earth more than the days of a fever that she had had as a child—they went so fast and yet seemed eternal! The hours lost their usual significance. It was no sooner morning than it was night; and night was no time for sleep, and yet was full of lurid dreams. Minutes held eternities, and nevertheless life was rushing with her she knew not whither. And she could not stop. She was herself and not herself; and she would wake and be the old little Nan, only to look with terror on what some new, strange Nan had done.

Just now, as she thought of the cool, green woods, the pine solitude, the wholesome, happy life at Queen's Compton under her husband's sheltering love, she could have sobbed aloud. Why had some mad Nan, that was not she, taken to gaming? Before Heaven, she did not know! No more than she knew why she had allowed Lord Sanquhar to monopolize her, four nights out of the five, and had coquetted the more, the more people had whispered and looked askance at them.

Now she had lost two hundred and fifty pounds! Two hundred and fifty pounds that, in connection with all her other extravagances, would run the credit—that generous credit the squire had allowed her at his bank—very low; so low, indeed, that she would have to apply for fresh funds before she could pay that milliner's account, the total of which—she had so bad a head for figures—she could only dimly guess at. The thought was intolerable. Yesterday she had won. There was no reason why she should go on losing this evening.

"Nay," she said, quickly, dropping her hands; "surely, my lord, the evening is but just begun."

She stretched out her fingers for the dice box.

He had been watching her with an air of benevolent patience. His clean-cut face had an almost statuesque repose, and his full lips were serenely set; but this appearance of impassivity was on occasions strangely contradicted by the quivering of thin nostrils. And how they quivered as Lady Anne's fingers closed upon the dice box! A spirit of passion and triumph breathed from his face, for who could read it. Slowly he pushed back the pieces of paper towards the center of the table.

"Double, then, or quits?" he asked. Then, catching himself up: "Nay, what am I saying? 'Tis so much against my practice to play thus with a fair adversary. Nay, Lady Anne, a little stake for little hands!"

"Double or quits!" cried she, fluttering anger like a child.

They flung, and she won.

"Now do I bless the fickle gods!" cried he, tearing up the scraps of paper with a fine play of fingers. "Now, Lady Anne, never another toss between us, for to have you owe to me—oh, 'twas hideous! 'Twas an intolerable burden!"

He flung the pieces of paper on the floor and took up the dice box. Then the devil entered into Nan again. She hesitated, half rose, sat down. And he, holding her with all his mind, while feigning not to heed or care what she did, had again that ominous quiver of eagerness in the wings of his nostrils.

"Would you end the game now that my luck has turned?" taunted she.

They staked. She lost. They doubled again; and once again she lost.

"You owe me a thousand pounds," he said, in quite another voice.

She stared at him aghast. A clamor of bells tolled calamity in her ears: "A thousand pounds! A thousand pounds!" The murmur of voices about her sounded suddenly far away, unreal. Some one laughed shrilly.

"My Lady Kilcroney's luck again!" Some one groaned.

"Luck is it? Sure, it's mine's the divil's own! But there; never say die, say I, and say dice when you can. Hurroosh, boys! I'm for it again."

The Irish accent sounded vaguely familiar. Lord Sanquhar leaned over the board and lightly touched one of Lady Anne's inert hands. She started violently and looked at him with wakening eyes, the blood rushing back to her face. Was it possible she had been

near swooning? How humiliating! He was still leaning across the table, his hand ready to lay itself upon hers again.

"Say but the word," he said, as once before, "and you owe me nothing."

But Anne, for all her youth, was no baby in the world's ways. Her French training, if it had had disadvantages, had at least taught her that a man's code of honor in dealing with a woman is one that every woman should most profoundly distrust. It was terrible to owe a thousand pounds; but might it not be worse still to owe this man gratitude? And yet she hesitated.

Two players, who were occupying a table in a distant corner, here suddenly broke up their game; one of them strolled towards the window embrasure and halted behind Lord Sanquhar's chair to make a bet on his next throw. The other, concealing his face with his hat, which he used as a fan (with a natural enough gesture on this sultry night), went and leaned against a pilaster; and, with his back half turned to the company, seemed to gaze absently into the night.

Lord Sanquhar drew himself up and flung a swift look over his shoulder.

"You'll get no sport here, Jim," said he, airily. "Lady Anne and myself have done with play, and are but conversing together for the present."

"Nay, my lord," retorted the other, "I trow you that you could both still afford me a pretty wager. Shall I lay you ten to one that I guess how it stands between her ladyship and yourself?"

"Oh, pray, gentlemen," said Nan, a fresh alarm springing into her eyes, "can you find no better excuse than myself for the bandying of your money?"

"I would I could," said Jim Devlin, looking at her very straight.

"Done with you, Jim," said Lord Sanquhar, passing suavely over Lady Anne's interruption.

"Why, then," said Devlin, "there you both sit with your hands before, and the dice box at rest. 'Tis as plain as a pikestaff you're quits."

The man at the window detached himself from the wall, came unobtrusively up to the table and stood behind Lady Anne. Lord Sanquhar pulled a piece of gold from his breeches pocket and slapped it down before Sir James.

"An easy win, man"—his nostrils quivered. "Her ladyship and I are quits, as you say—for the present."

The color faded on Nan's cheeks, and then flamed once more. She pushed her chair back.

"It is not so!" she cried, in a high, trembling voice. "My Lord Sanquhar, Sir James, I take it ill that you should make me the subject of your bets; but, since it is so, *mon Dieu!* let's have the truth. We are *not* quits. I owe Lord Sanquhar a thousand pounds."

Her words had rung louder than she reckoned. Lady Buckinghamshire, who was taking a stroll around her premises with a wary eye on the different tables—scandal whispered that she had a creature in her pay at nearly every one of them and impounded much of the winnings every night—was attracted by the sound, and directed her steps toward the group. She was leaning on the arm of a small, foppish youth, who seemed somewhat overpowered by the honor.

"Who has lost a thousand pounds?" cried she, with mock horror in her own strident tones. "Fie! that I cannot entertain my friends to a little moderate amusement but that such high stakes should be sent flying!"

"No one has lost a thousand pounds," said Lord Sanquhar, smiling. "And there lies my golden word that my fair adversary and I are even."

"What! that chit?" said Lady Buckinghamshire, measuring, not unkindly, Nan's lovely youth. "Nay, never look so distressed, child! Why, if you had lost *ten* thousand, you need have no anxiety about payment—not for some twenty years to come—with that face. Eh, my Lord Damory?"

Lady Anne rose from her chair and looked fiercely at her hostess' raddled countenance. An idiotic laugh from Lord Damory, a look of well-assumed vagueness upon Sir James Devlin's smooth, spare features, the indescribable flicker upon Sanquhar's as he dropped his eyelids—each man in his way had somehow pointed the observation so

that it went cruelly home to her pride. A fierceness rose in her.

"Nay, madam," she said, with deliberate enunciation, "I fail to comprehend you. Need a woman have your countenance and your years to be honest enough to wish to pay her debts?"

A light of enjoyment and admiration leaped into Devlin's glance. His neighbor turned away, seized with a fit of coughing. The man that stood behind Nan made a quick movement forward, then restrained himself. Lord Sanquhar still sat with drooping lids. Lord Kilcroney, from the table near them, suddenly exploded into his hands. But Lady Buckinghamshire's retort, delayed by a second's blank astonishment, promptly drowned all other sounds.

"Who is the honest young lady, may I ask? Upon rep, my fair madam, you do well to study with my Lord Sanquhar if you would retain those virtues which so well become you! You do, indeed, la! Here, then, is a beauty who is anxious to pay her debts! Why, and I trust so, madam"—from high sarcasm Lady Buckinghamshire now abruptly fell into rough bullying—"else would you be no guest for this house. I shall have no fine ladies here who think they can play for ruinous stakes, then act the pretty cheat. Come, my fine madam, you owe Lord Sanquhar a thousand pounds! You'll pay Lord Sanquhar a thousand pounds, if you please. You'll give him your note for the amount this moment—ay, before you leave the table."

Nan swayed a little as she stood in her young dignity, and put out her hands vaguely. Into what trap had she rushed in her folly? How could she do as this horrible old woman said? How could she sign away a thousand pounds straight off, when she had not a penny beyond that three hundred in the bank that she could honestly call her own?

There was a stir among the men. Sanquhar started from his seat. At the same instant Devlin, Lord Damory and the man behind Nan's chair took a simultaneous step forward, which brought them close to each other.

"Lady Buckinghamshire, you are speaking to my cousin, Lady Anne Day!" said Lord Damory, in feeble, shocked tones, his round eyes starting from his head.

"Buck," said Jim Devlin, his cool, mocking air striking like a spray upon the stout lady's gross heat, "go and play your own little game, there's a good soul, and don't ever meddle in other people's, else you'll drive us to Archer's or Goosetree's."

"And when I assure Lady Buckinghamshire," said Lord Sanquhar, with great deliberation, "that Lady Anne owes me nothing, that 'twas a mere error of calculation—and that's the easiest thing in the world, as our gentle hostess herself knows—her natural anxiety for the honor of her house will, I trust, be instantly allayed."

Nan stood looking from one to the other, half poised for flight, half ready to turn at bay with the last desperate courage of the weakling. She was hesitating once more on the edge of that precipice, Sanquhar's protection. But the man behind her pushed by them and stood beside her, so that her retreat was barred.

All stared at him. None of Lady Buckinghamshire's *habitues* had acquaintance with the owner of that handsome, stern face. But Nan gave a faint cry and caught at the amber curtain behind her to save herself from falling. Lady Buckinghamshire, feeling, perhaps, that she had scarcely cut a graceful figure, hereupon promptly and discreetly vanished.

The man whom, here, only Nan knew turned and spoke quickly in her ear: "Compose yourself; there's been scandal enough!"

Then he advanced upon the others. "Gentlemen, the matter is quickly settled. My Lord Sanquhar—such is your name, I believe—your statement is incorrect. The Lady Anne Day owes you at this moment one thousand pounds, for which sum I will instantly write you a note, which Messrs. Drummond will duly honor on sight."

The eyes of the two men met.

"Pray," said Lord Sanquhar, drawing a long breath through those flickering

nostrils of his, while his lips yet wore a sweet smile; "pray, sir, whom might I have the honor——? I am not surprised that you should wish to assume a privilege which I intend to keep for myself, but—'tis perhaps a mere prejudice—among gentlemen there are such trifles as introductions. Even here"—he cast his insolent eye about him and brought it back to the attack—"even here we keep to these small decencies of life."

"My lord," said the stranger, drawing his tablets from his pocket and sitting down at the table with an unconcern that was more contemptuous than any words, "if you will kindly look at the signature upon this paper you will see that I need no introduction to you to pay my wife's debts."

Had Philip Day been a vain man, he might well have been elated at the sensation here produced. Lord Sanquhar's face became convulsed with a passion, instantly repressed, but which left him livid as it passed, and betrayed how fully his sudden adversary had scored. There were murmurs and glances of admiration among the group of onlookers.

Any Englishman, however degenerate, however vapid or dissolute, will yet keep a spark in him that kindles for the husband defending his wife's honor. Had the squire now hung, as once, on Anne's least glance, he would have thrilled to the fire that her blue eyes shot at him through the rising tears. But the master of Queen's Compton had no pride in his evening's work. None, *certes*—only a deep shame that his Nan should have made her name so light a thing as to be bandied between these idle gamblers. He wrote in silence and unmoved gravity; and then, getting up, handed the tablet, with a slight inclination of the head, to Lord Sanquhar.

"The honor of an introduction to Lord Sanquhar," he said, in level tones, as though continuing his former speech, "is one that I do not covet."

Lord Sanquhar bowed very low; and, though he smiled, his face was still deathly white. "But I shall have the honor," he retorted, taking the paper and folding it as he spoke, "of sending you a due acknowledgment of the receipt of your favor, Mr.——" He opened the paper, sought the name with supercilious eyebrow raised, then his eye quickened. "Ah!" he went on in altered tones: "I see you have put down the address. Your servant, Mr. Day." He slipped the paper into his breast and made another bow, less profound but infinitely more courteous.

"It is always well," answered Philip Day, steadily, "to mark the address in a transaction of this kind. It precludes all possible misunderstanding." Sanquhar fell back with a gesture of acknowledgment; and, without one further glance at Lady Anne, he walked away.

The squire approached his wife and offered her his arm.

"Your coach awaits? That is well; I will conduct you to it."

He led her across the room towards Lady Buckinghamshire, who watched them come, half nervous, half defiant.

"Madam," he said, "my wife and I are infinitely obliged to you for your entertainment."

Trembling on his arm, Lady Anne, with lids cast down, swept a courtesy. A little silence, and many eyes followed their exit.

"By the powers," said the Viscount Kilcroney, lying back in his chair with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, "but our little Lady Anne has got a pretty beau at last. Where did she pick up such a stag?"

"Tush, man!" said his neighbor, Jim Devlin. "A beau! Why, 'tis the lady's own husband. Lord, such a connubial play as we've seen!"

"Nan's husband!" echoed honest Kilcroney, and drew his fingers out of his pockets to thump the table in his amazement. "Then of all the little, linnet-headed, little geese!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

No sooner did she find herself safe in the coach with her husband than Lady Anne collapsed into a corner and burst into tears—tears, no doubt, less of remorse than of relief and joy.

But the quality of her emotion soon changed. She, who had not doubted that she would forthwith find herself gathered into his arms and have the happy luxury of sobbing her repentance on his breast, was met by a silence, an immobility that struck a chill to her heart. It seemed almost as if that presence by her side gave out cold. Her tears froze upon her cheeks; the sobs were strangled in her throat; she felt paralyzed. The more ardently she desired reconciliation and the restoration of his love at any price, the more utterly incapable she found herself of making an advance.

Perhaps, could she have known what strong tension the man was putting upon himself to keep those arms of his folded from the touch of her, even in anger; to keep those lips sternly silent, even from reproach, she might still have found that simple phrase of love, regret and submission which would have brought from his manly heart the most instant, the most complete, forgiveness. But this impassiveness, this silence that chilled, ended at last by hardening her. There is no tide so bitter to a woman's heart as passion driven back upon itself. A man may be rebuffed, may have his advances rejected, and yet suffer no loss of dignity, even in his own eyes. But the woman conscious in her heart of an unreciprocated ardor; the woman, the wife, who calls to her own and is unanswered—there is no humiliation deeper than hers, no more maddening sting to retaliation. Alas for poor Nan! She had found it too easy hitherto to flout him and then recall him. She had turned the facile weapon of her tears too often upon him; and tears that no longer touch have the art of singularly irritating. For the sake of his own mankind, for the sake of their future peace, seeing therein the sole chance of happiness with her, he had resolved that nothing short of the most complete surrender on her part would induce him to take her again to his enfolding love. Perverse child, she must be taught her lesson! He had dreamed to teach her with a kiss, and she had chosen the rod. So be it—till the scholar was perfect. True—and he knew it—he was playing a mighty dangerous game. But the stake was high; and, taking all in all, he had confidence in his wife's innermost rectitude of soul. Even now, amid the sullen thunders of his indignation, the cry of her honest young voice loudly acknowledging the debt echoed gratefully in his memory. His Nan had her pure heart still. And, besides, was he not—unknown to her—keeping watch and ward?

. . . . . .

When he stood on the steps between Lady Kilcroney's link-extinguishers to hand her out of the coach, with that elaborate Frenchified ceremony that seemed assumed in sheer irony of her taste, she could have struck his hand aside with the temper of a child. It was all she could do to keep her head high and respond with due haughtiness to his hateful "Good-night to you, my lady; or, rather, good-morning!" as he bowed her into the hall.

On the first bend of the stairs she paused and looked back. He was still standing, as if waiting. Her heart gave a great leap. She turned round. He read her thought, and spoke. And, oh! how she blessed her little angry gods a minute later, in the kind darkness of her room, that before she had betrayed her joy or descended a step he had spoken first. Said he:

"I should like a few words with my Lord Kilcroney—on a pure matter of business," he added, with a smile so cruel, she thought, that she could hardly draw her breath as she hurried, shaken now out of all dignity, from his sight.

. . . . . .

Philip Day's face was very thoughtful as he followed the servant into the library, where, between strictly undisturbed shelves, Lord Kilcroney had his broiled bones, and their usual liquid accompaniments, towards the small hours of most mornings.

. . . . . .

Lady Kilcroney bounced into her friend's room without knocking, ruthless of disturbance to slumbers. That it

should be in darkness seemed but to increase the hostess' ire. She called shrilly upon Lydia for a light; and, closing the door, marched to the bed upon very determined high heels.

In truth, the memory of certain words that had passed between herself and her lord, as they returned from "Lady Buck's," was rankling in Kitty's mind to such an extent that she could not think of sleep before she had had her say on the night's doings.

Kilcroney—in whose eyes hitherto his Kitty, the most perfect of women, could do no wrong—had actually turned upon her with something approaching to rebuke.

"I don't know what game it is you're playing, Kitty, with that guest of ours," had he said; "but I'm thinking now you had best have left her in the country."

"And, indeed, Denis," had retorted with wrath the lady (who had already heard various accounts of what James Devlin called "the connubial scene," and was not in the best of humors with her once "sweetest Nan" for creating scandal), "I wish I had. For she is the silliest piece I have ever dealt with, and I've known many fools in my day."

"She's got a fine fellow of a husband," had remarked Kilcroney, "and the mischief's in it; I am sorry for the man." And he would have added, "Send her home," in that tone of authority so rarely used that it was all-paramount in its effect, but that his Irish notions of hospitality could not let him contemplate such a step towards a guest. He had, therefore, gone on merely with the remark:

"If the little thing's a fool, the more reason for you, who are none"—here he had pinched her ear good-naturedly, but his tone was none the less reproving—"to be leading her into all this nonsense. She's too monstrous pretty," he added, reflectively.

To be found fault with by the adoring Denis was an unheard-of situation in itself; but this last remark had been intolerable. Nevertheless, Kilcroney's viscountess was far too shrewd (unlike silly Nan) to wreak vengeance where it would only recoil upon herself. Reserving her forces, therefore, for the other delinquent, she had been softer than silk to her lord all the rest of the drive; but her energies were none the less potent for being pent up till the proper moment.

It is not of the least use to pretend sleep when you are lying, in your finery, on the outside of the bed and your pillow is all wet with tears. It is also exceedingly difficult to present either an airy or a dignified front when thus discovered. And the gentlest woman would be prone to tartness in such disadvantageous circumstances.

"Pray, Lady Kilcroney——" began Lady Anne, in no amiable tones, as she sat up in the four-poster and jerked her face pettishly aside from the light.

"And pray, you foolish thing," retorted Kitty, with a highly virtuous air, "I am sure I'm not surprised to see you cry. A pretty mess you have made of things this night! Good God! woman," went on Lady Kilcroney, putting down the candlestick with a slap, "how shall I look Lady Ongar in the face again? Do you really know so little of the world that you must choose the rooms of the most disreputable woman in London for your outbreak—and insult her, into the bargain, that she may not leave you as much character even as herself?"

"But, if it comes to that," answered the other, striving in vain to keep the sound of tears from her voice, and still looking steadily away, "if it comes to that, Lady Kilcroney, the question may well be—how comes it that you should bring one who is your guest into the company of the most disreputable woman in London?"

"I—bring you?" cried Kitty, clapping her soft palms together. "Now, Heaven grant me patience! I bring you, child? Did I not do all that a hostess in civility can do to keep you at home? Did I not tell you there was gaming? Did I not hint to you that you would do well to visit your mother? Did I not—only this very evening—bid you (if you would take my advice) to bed early, to get back to your country roses, which are fast withering, my dear? Short of telling you plain I'd as lief not have your

company, madam, pray, how would you have had me act?"

There was a stricken silence from the fair culprit on the bed. This was all so literally true that, in sooth, even her active tongue had no answer ready. Presently, however, a retort suggested itself.

"I marvel, Lady Kilcroney, that a lady of your position should herself frequent such a house! How could I, your guest——"

"Oh, you marvel, madam, do you?" Kitty took a couple of steps nearer the bed. "Well, 'tis but natural, I suppose, you should marvel. I go there, Lady Anne, for a reason you, indeed, would be little like to understand. I go there—that my husband may not go alone."

"As you say," flashed back Lady Anne, turning full now upon her adversary, "having myself a husband, my Lady Kilcroney, who, *Dieu merci!* can be trusted to look after himself, 'tis little like I could have a fellow-feeling for such motives."

"Nay, poor man," quoth Kitty, smiling in a quite intolerable manner, "'tis all the other way in your household, my love. And, indeed, 'tis a vast deal of looking after you require, as the worthy gentleman your husband found out tonight to his cost. I believe you would have been at a pretty pass, indeed, had he not stepped to your rescue. I am given to understand that your cantrips have cost him nothing short of a thousand pounds, besides the scandal of the business. I fear he will end by finding you an—an expensive luxury, my sweet child!"

She waited a second, her eyes sparkling, her wicked, witty mouth curled upon a scornful smile. This time Nan had positively nothing to say. After a triumphant pause:

"I wish you a pleasant rest," cried Lady Kilcroney, in delicate derision, made a very rustling courtesy, took up her candlestick, and retired.

## CHAPTER IX.

The fair skirmishers met again at that late breakfast over which the whilom lazy Kitty had, since her marriage, made it a rule always to preside. Gone were the days when she supped her creamy chocolate and nibbled her biscuits in the shadow of rosy bed curtains; when she vowed that the world was not mellow enough for her countenance before noon!

Kilcroney had asserted that he could not swallow a mouthful; that every bit he took, by the powers, had no taste in it unless his little darling sat opposite to him. And the lady was wise in the ways of men. She knew that if a fond husband (who is, at the same time, decidedly a gregarious soul) be left solitary by his wife, he must inevitably seek other company in the end.

Lady Anne was elaborately civil to her hostess this morning. Lady Kilcroney, on her side, was kind and gentle; nay, almost tender in her manner.

But the genial presence of Kilcroney himself was missing at the meal, and his wife made no reference to the fact. On the whole, it was a dismal repast. Kitty crumpled her bread, glanced at the clock, started at the least sound, and now and again cast looks of compassion, almost of sorrow, at her companion. The latter, with no more pronounced appetite, was infinitely more composed. One would have thought that, in the over-night events, it was Kitty who had been the culprit and Nan the creature of superior virtue, wisdom and disapproval.

Suddenly Lady Kilcroney sprang to her feet; her face went pale. Nan stared at her in amazement. The next instant Lord Kilcroney entered the room. The eyes of husband and wife met—hers full of anxious inquiry—and the man gave a little nod. He looked vastly tired (vastly dissipated, thought Lady Anne, severely), with heavy eyes that evidently had not closed all night, and deep lines of fatigue around his handsome mouth; but vastly good-humored for all that.

The squire's wife went on primly breaking tiny pieces off her bread roll, and occasionally popping one between her lips. She might be all that was remiss in a wife (as Kitty had given her to understand), but, upon her soul, she

had more spirit in her than to permit *her* husband to walk in from the street to breakfast after so evidently making a night of it. If that was not the self-same lavender coat and the blush-pink waistcoat he had sported at the gambling rooms, then had Nan no eye for color.

All at once she became aware that an extraordinary agitation had taken possession of Kitty—the little viscountess seemed to hesitate between smiles and tears.

"Kitty, me darling," said Lord Kilcroney, with elaborate carelessness, "what have you got for me? Nay, I've no stomach for that hot-water stuff this morning. I could do with a round of beef and a tankard. You'll be hearing news presently," he turned pointedly to Nan. "My Lord Sanquhar, I grieve to say, has been seized with an inflammation of the lung. You will read of it in the *Gazette* to-morrow."

"*Eh, mon Dieu!* 'tis a sudden illness," said Nan, her heart beginning to beat so quickly that she spoke with difficulty.

"Mighty sudden," said her host, with something of a wink.

"But no one else is ill, I trust?" put in Kitty, quickly.

"Devil a bit," answered Kilcroney, with much cheerfulness. "Everyone the better, I should say."

The tears and smiles which had been struggling for possession of Lady Kilcroney's charming *minois* now amicably settled the affair between them and appeared together. When Kitty smiled she was bewitching, and when she wept she was adorable; when she smiled and wept at once she was altogether distracting. She ran across the room and, to Nan's great amazement, caught her round the neck.

"My dear, my dear——" she said, and gave a little sob. "Kilcroney, we can tell her now."

"About this same lung of Sanquhar's?" said Kilcroney. "'Tis not astonishing it should ache him, considering how your good husband has let the air of the morning in upon it. Raw air it was, begorrah!"

"My husband?" said Nan, haughtily.

"Oh, you understand very well," said Kitty, giving her a shake. "And think what it would have been, Nan, if he had been hurt instead, and you at variance with him—and all for your fault!"

She looked across at her own lord, her dark eyes misted with the unwonted softness of her shaken mood. She wore that morning pale primrose ribbons to her muslin wrapper, and a little lace cap was poised on the top of her dark curls, just clouded with powder. Denis gazed at her, enraptured. He took two great steps towards her, and she a fluttering trip towards him. Then Lady Anne, holding her head stiff with an air of great decorum, heard the sound of his fond kiss. Her own miserable heart swelled. She was palpitating, too, to know the story. Indeed, from the first mention of Lord Sanquhar's name, in a flash she had realized what must have taken place. But certain situations demand a very special dignity, and no situation more than that of being thoroughly in the wrong.

"'Pon my soul," said his lordship, sinking down into his chair and looking already prodigiously refreshed, although the tankard and cold beef were as yet untouched, "'twas the neatest thing I ever saw in me life. That husband of yours, Lady Nan, is the boy for my money." He took up the carving knife to help himself, but paused, in a smiling reminiscence, balancing it in his hand. "Bejabers!" he laughed. "There stood Sanquhar—as tight a fellow as you could see—on guard, the cock of Angelo's, and ready, by thunder! to make a pretty widow this morning, with all the rules of one-two-pink; and there stood my man—meaning yours, your ladyship—who knows no more of French *ca-ca* games than an English bulldog. But he knew what he wanted. Ladies, I'm glad you did not see his face; 'twould have spoilt the elegance of your dreams for a week! He knew what he wanted, and, by the Lord, he took it! Just a step and a thrust, his own great chest as uncovered as be-damned. It gave me a twist down the back, I can tell you, to have to stand and watch his recklessness."

The speaker made a neat pass at the

round of beef with strong and nimble wrist, and left the carving knife sticking in the joint. Lady Anne gave a faint cry and covered her face with her hands. But Kitty clapped her palms together and crowed triumph with soft and cruel joy. "'Twas the quickest meeting I ever went to," concluded Denis, with satisfaction.

He drew his weapon out of the beef and began to slice with great gusto. Then presently he resumed:

"My Lord Sanquhar was the one who was puzzled! By George! he was so taken aback that he hadn't time to be astonished. He drops me his sword, he claps me his hand over his side, and stares. And then he goes as red as the blood that's creeping out between his fingers, and then as white as the shirt against it. He staggers and then gets a hold of his ground again, and he stares at my man, and my man stares him back. And, by the Lord! we were as quiet as mice about them—as if the fight were still going on. Then Sanquhar's face begins to work. I think it was trying to smile he was, but he looked like a devil. And he fumbles with his left hand in his breeches pocket and draws out a bit of paper. And he begins to tear at it between his left hand and his teeth, still clapping his side with the right. 'Mr. Day!' he calls; 'Mr. Day! I'd have taken your wife, but I'll be damned if I take your money!' And, with that, he crumples up in a heap on the ground."

Lady Anne rose to her feet with a single spring. Her blue eyes blazed from out her pale face on her good-natured host.

"How dare you!" she said. "How dare you, sir, repeat this insult to me?" She rushed for the door with a great scolding of silks. "I hope Lord Sanquhar will die!" she cried, from the threshold, with desperate intensity.

## CHAPTER X.

Lady Flora Dare-Stamer was at home to her friends at Elm Park House on the evening of the fifth of June. She requested their presence in masks. Lady Kilcroney tossed her head on receiving the handsome card, engraved in charming style by Mr. Cipriani.

"I see myself in that rabble!" quoth she.

Now, this was scarcely fair on Lady Flo, who, good-natured as she was, knew very well how to keep her celebrated parties vastly select. But she was none of Kitty Kilcroney's friends, and Kitty Kilcroney had no pleasant souvenir of Elm Park House.

Moreover, the little lady had begun to find that Nan's pie was considerably too hot for her pretty fingers. She had had, after the Sanquhar duel, a stormy visit from my Lady Ongar, who had hitherto kept prudently aloof from the house which sheltered her rebellious daughter.

The fat countess had displayed a deal of vivacity in the encounter. Between indignant interjections of French *mon Dieus* and English "hoity-toitys," the irate mother had contrived to make some very shrewdish digs at the viscountess' own past—a past which, if vivacious, was nevertheless a record of such virtue that Kitty was proportionately furious at her visitor's innuendoes. There had been, therefore, a very pretty passage of arms between the two dames; and, indeed, upon Lady Kilcroney's triumphant courtesying forth of her antagonist, it was the proper sense of what was due to herself that made her resolve, in righteous defiance, to keep Lady Anne for the rest of the season. Yet, truth to tell, she was already so heartily sick of her position as chaperon that, had it not been for the mother's ill-advised step, it is probable that Kitty would have traversed her lord's hospitable commands and, after some manner only known to feminine ingenuity, very soon have driven Lady Nan elsewhere.

Thus the Kilcroney mansion could not be said to be now a very harmonious abode. But Nan was more determined than ever to remain, in spite of her hostess' perceptibly sour-sweet demeanor. Pride for pride, she had rather bide, an unwelcome guest, than return, an unwelcome wife. For another small diplomatic movement that she had made

towards her husband had met with the same torturing result—utmost generosity of hand combined with utmost unresponsiveness of heart.

It was but a short letter that she had sent him, upon a mere matter of business—one of the grays having fallen lame; but surely, surely, he might have read between the lines.

"I am so sorry"—so it ran—"I hope you won't be angry. Town life is very trying; but I can quite well do with two horses. And if it gets rest at dear Queen's Compton, it must soon recover." She further hoped that Philip was very well, and that Philip's mother was very well. She sent her love. She remained his dutiful wife. P.S.—Town was very hot.

To this letter she had received no reply, unless the prompt substitution of another horse for the lame one could be regarded as such.

Nan was very angry, with the deep anger of the heart. She had not known in her girlhood that one's poor body could be so torn with ugly passion. So be it! Now she would show him complete indifference. Now he must suffer as he had made her suffer. Now was Lady Anne Day to prove herself the most gay, the most sought, the most famous beauty and breaker of hearts in all London Town.

And therefore was she mightily displeased at Lady Kilcroney's decision to refuse the Elm Park House invitation; for Lady Flora's masks, always graced by royalty, were beyond compare the best of the season's routs.

She turned her own card over and over between her fingers. Emancipated though she was, she could hardly make up her mind to go alone; on the other hand, Lady Ongar had so successfully worked among her friends that Nan dared not beg another matron's companionship.

"'Twill seem vastly strange that you should absent yourself, surely," she ventured, at first with some timidity.

"Nay, my love," returned Kitty, sweetly. "This is doubtless an evil world, but there are a few women of heart and conduct left. No one will wonder at a wife who likes to spend an evening at home now and again with her husband. You have such French notions, my dearest dear!"

Woman of the world as she strove to be, Nan could never keep the telltale blood from rushing to her face; but she was learning fast to whet the sharpness of her own tongue against Lady Kilcroney's.

"Nay, a thousand pardons, Kitty," she cried, opening her eyes with that expression of candor which most exasperated her hostess. "I should have remembered you have, indeed, most excellent reasons for keeping away from Lady Flo's."

"How now, chit?" cried Kitty, hotly.

"'Twould be, perhaps, a most unpleasant encounter."

"The child is raving!"

"My Lord Mandeville is safe to be there with his beautiful countess. People would be watching you, *ma pauvre amie*. 'Twould be hard, indeed, to wear a fitting countenance."

"Your ignorance, my angel, is the only thing that excuses your absurdity. Pray be assured that I shall ever meet my Lord Mandeville with calm pulses. I hear the creature's grown fat, but I still take an interest in his wife."

"Oh, of course," commented Anne, with an acid giggle.

"Faith, Nan," said Kitty, gazing at her with disapproval, "I've made a mistake. Town is no school for you. Your head is not strong enough to bear it. And your poor husband was in the right of it. Pray do not bring your bits of slanderous gossip into my house. People in our position will be lied about, no doubt; but people of our breeding pay no heed to such low scandals."

"If you refer," said Lady Anne, calmly, "to the fact that my Lord Mandeville had the bad taste to prefer an actress to yourself, although you would, perhaps, not have said him nay, I beg to state, my Lady Kilcroney, that I have it on most respectable authority."

"Respectable authority!" echoed Kitty, very angry indeed. "Why, 'tis the vilest falsehood! I wonder at you that you have the face to repeat it. And

who, madam, pray, told you that fine tale?"

"'Twas yourself, dear Kitty," cooed my Lady Anne.

"I?" cried Lady Kilcroney. Her eyes flashed. Then—for she had a sense of humor—she broke into rippling laughter. "Did I? Was it possible that I once thought so well of you as to make you my confidante? Why, then, you've sadly changed for the worse, Nan, and I'll not bring you to Elm Park to make a fool of yourself in a mask. Look you for another escort, or go alone, if you'll not take my advice and stay at home quietly."

Though she walked out of the room laughing, my Lady Kilcroney loved the Lady Anne Day none the dearer for this conversation. And Lady Anne Day, though she fell to sad brooding the instant her friend's back was turned, was none the less resolved upon Elm Park House.

## CHAPTER XI.

Melancholy in solitude can be almost a pleasing sensation; but melancholy in the midst of a gay crowd is intolerable. The masque at Elm Park House was as flat, stale and unprofitable an evening as French Nan had yet spent since she had left the Rue St. Honoré.

The fruit of her own way was, indeed, bitter to-night between her teeth. For escort during the long, lonely drive she had at last, in sheer desperation, fixed upon her Cousin Damory. That youth was, *certes,* no interesting personality; but, at any rate, tongues could not wag too freely over her choice, nor evil minds impute to her any desire for dangerous company. His vacuity, however, did not tend to make her forget her private troubles. Without even the spice of risk to make her pulses beat the faster, her escapade to-night became the veriest boredom.

She could hardly keep her mouth, under the hanging lace of the mask, from unmeasured yawning. Around her a hundred couples flirted and whispered. One could almost hear the rustle of volatile Cupid's wings, the hiss of his tiny arrows, the little cries that heralded the straightness of his aim.

Some gentlemen were masked, others not; but the ladies, without exception, wore their visards. How Lady Kilcroney would have reveled in such an opportunity! Nan had been thought by a French court to have a pretty wit of her own. But not one piquant sally did she feel spirit enough to shoot at the most provoking beau of the night from her coign of vantage; not a gleam of the eye did she feel the strength to send sparkling, though none could have identified the sender.

She sat, she walked, she danced like an automaton, Cousin Damory her uninspiring shadow, his vapid comment ever in her ear.

"Why, Cousin Nan! Look at that fellow! Did you see that pair, Cousin Nan? I vow that's Sukey; she's been following my Lord Verney the whole evening! See, he's got up again and gone away! D'ye think she'll run him down, Cousin Nan? He, he! I wouldn't like to have Sukey after me. She's a prodigious persevering girl, is Sukey—he, he! Cousin Nan, what a little ear you have got; 'tis just like a little pink shell, Cousin Nan!"

A hundred times Nan pettishly protested that she would endure no more of this insufferable tedium, but must have her coach instantly. Yet each time she lingered. It seemed a final humiliation to depart thus without even the poor reward of her audacity.

In truth, Nan was but a little coward at heart. It was the first time she had ventured into company without Kitty Kilcroney's airy protection. She did not drive Damory from her elbow—dull dog as he was—for to find herself alone among this daring crowd would have meant giddy terror.

. . . . . .

"Fie, little mask," said a man's voice in her ear; "where were you brought up that you do not know the golden motto, 'Waste not, want not!'"

Nan wheeled round. A pair of pale-blue eyes were fixing her with singular and unpleasant steadiness through a

black visard, so close to her that she started back. Then, rallying, with a feeble effort at coquetry: "Need speech be masked as well as face to-night?"

"Oh! little mask," answered the other, sinking into the chair behind her, and leaning over to whisper into her ear, "words are like faces, and we put masks upon them to tempt others to look for the beauty beneath. Waste not your sweetness, for if you husband not good fortune to-night, you may want to-morrow."

"Husband good fortune?" she queried vaguely, edging away from the gaze and the whisper that troubled her, she knew not why.

"And what's he saying, Cousin Nan?" inquired Damory, with a pull at her sleeve.

Truly masques were an intolerable pleasure!

"Husband," repeated he of the pale, fixed eyes, leaning forward as she withdrew. "Nay," came the whisper in her ear, "what a word! Let no one ever speak of husbands—the name shall be obliterated. Let it be lover in our book!"

Nan turned her little chin sharply away and made as if she heard not. On went the soft, evil whisper:

"Have you met with no such word in your dictionary, sweet one? Shall we then not turn the leaves and look for it together? Oh, it is such a pretty page! It begins with love, lovable and goes on softly: Lovely, lovelorn—lover, loving."

The whisper became so insidious, the presence across her chair so pressingly close, that Nan rose in a flutter and sharply commanded Lord Damory to order their coach without an instant's delay.

But here she reckoned without her host, for Damory would not leave without supping. No—not for a thousand Nans! And here was once again sad proof of the inconveniency of mere cousins as cavaliers.

To the supper room had Nan to go. In the supper room she had to sit, while Damory ate and drank in maddening deliberation—if, indeed, such a word could be applied to the rapidity with which he absorbed glass after glass of Lady Flo's celebrated Sillery.

To her terror the mask with the blue eyes followed her; in spite of her determinedly hunched shoulder and an icy assumption of deafness the whisper still kept dropping words that alternately drove the angry blood to her cheek or drained the color even from her lips with an unreasoning sense of danger.

At last Damory was dragged to the hall—an even more garrulous and cheerful Damory than before. And Nan stood, tapping her little foot on the step of the granite porch, impatiently waiting the coming up of the grays, gathering courage at the moment of escape, though the insolent blue-eyed whisperer stood but a pace behind her.

"Will you not let Cousin Damory go back to the capons, sweetheart, and give me his seat? Cousin Damory will but send you to sleep on the way—and, by all the little gods, this night never was made for sleep!"

"What if I prefer to sleep in a coach?" cried the emboldened Nan.

"Ah, then, again, sweet mask, would you do well to take me! I will give you a pretty dream. . . . Lord, what a dull dream will you have if you trust to Cousin Damory!"

"How, sir?" said Damory, wheeling round at the sound of his name. The Sillery was scintillating in his usual placid brain.

The grays drew up—all silver in the moonlight, champing and stamping. 'Twas a noble team, an equipage for a queen.

"Choose—choose quickly!" bade Nan's tormentor. "Little lady, if you take *me*, we shall drive into fairyland!"

"My destination is Mayfair," cried Nan, tartly, as she ran down the steps.

"With me you would reach Mayfair in due safety, my dream-princess, but, as I say, by way of fairyland. 'Tis ever, alas! the shortest road."

"But I prefer the safest," retorted Nan, with an angry laugh, thrusting her head out of the window. "Come along, Cousin Damory!"

The blue-eyed mask burst into a

laugh; and the laugh was taken up in titters by one or two curious spectators as Damory clambered in.

"Oh, ay!" cried the rejected escort, no whit discomfited, it seemed. "Ay," he cried, loudly and derisively, "if 'tis safety is your aim, pretty Nan, you've chosen prodigious wise to-night! You will tell me some day how it likes your ladyship after a fair trial!"

"Drive on!" shouted Damory, furiously; and the grays sprang forward.

"By your leave, sir," said a stern voice behind him. A tall, masked man pushed somewhat roughly by him, ran down the steps, and swung himself on a sturdy bay horse, which had been led up in the wake of the coach by a servant in plain livery.

"I shall know the cut of those shoulders again," said Jim Devlin, as he stood looking after the departing guest, ruminating. He doffed his mask and strolled back to the revels.

## CHAPTER XII.

Cousin Damory, valiant with the spark of Sillery, was in high condition of mingled fury and enterprise. Safe, quotha!—safe, indeed! He would soon show them! The meaner the masculine intellect, the more enraging such a suggestion. But, indeed, even the most gifted youth would hardly regard a beautiful woman's unlimited confidence when alone with him as a compliment.

"Jim Devlin is an ass, and——" he began, fury having the upper hand.

"Was, then, yonder mask Jim Devlin?" commented Nan, a small, cold shiver upon her, she scarce knew why. "'Tis the devil himself," had said Kitty. What strain of unsuspected wickedness must be in her, that she, Nan, should yet feel a sort of fascination at the back of her fear of this "devil"? She pulled off her mask, for she felt half stifled with her own blushes.

"'Twas prodigious well of you, Cousin Nan, that you should choose me for your escort," proceeded Lord Damory, enterprise rising. "I feel prodigious flattered at your preference, dear cousin."

Lady Anne, from her troubling occupations, cast upon him an indifferent glance. What ailed the fool that he should edge so close to her? She pointed her elbow to keep him in his place.

They were whirling along at a fine pace, the grays drumming a rhythm of haste upon the silent night. The waste fields were all gossamer sparkling in the moonlight. The airs which their own speed caught from the still atmosphere fanned Nan's hot cheek and set her curls dancing, but they could not cool Cousin Damory's ardor. Vaguely he felt, besides the stimulus of wine and taunt, that here indeed was an opportunity for your buck—egad, one of positive obligation!

He began to steal a tentative hand round the trim bodice beside him.

"Oh!"—she started.

"Why, you're never frightened of me?"

"Of you?"

Might he not have read warning upon that contemptuous lip? But shades of expression are not for the Damorys of this world. His left arm closed round the slender waist, and, in spite of pointing elbow, it was joined by the right, so that he held her encircled.

"I vow . . . in the moonlight," he cried, groping after some dimly perceived romance, "you're so prodigious pretty, Cousin Nan! You chose me, did not you?" And upon this he kissed all he could reach of her—the back of her round, white neck.

Had Nan met these advances either as a jest between kin or with repressive coldness, she might promptly have had the better of Lord Damory. But in her inexperience, with cries and angry ejaculations, she fell to fighting like an angry wild thing. And, the situation mounting to his weak brain, even as had the Sillery, Damory was but stimulated. In sooth, he was prodigiously elated. Egad, what a dangerous fellow must he be! Yet, in her encompassing indignation, it was the contemptible personality of her assailant that seemed the unbearable side of the outrage in her eyes.

"Let go of me, you fool! For shame of you, Cousin Damory! My footman

shall throw you on the road in a minute, sir! Hey, John—John!"

But her delicate little pipe was lost in the song of flying iron hoofs and the humming of wheels.

And it is quite possible that Cousin Damory might have succeeded in actually planting a second salute, in spite of the fierce fingers that nipped and slapped, had not the coach been so suddenly drawn up that both occupants were thrown forward with a jerk. When they raised themselves, there was such a scrimmage in the world about them that it was many seconds before either of them could grasp the situation. But when, to the shouting of footman and coachman, to the plunging of the horses, to the rough, threatening accents of unknown voices, was added the vision of a loathsome, cloth-covered countenance at either window, the horrible circumstances became but too plain—the coach had been stopped by footpads.

What a prize for such birds of prey was the gay coach with the silver steeds, the bejeweled lady!

And where, now, were Cousin Damory's ardors? Where his unwonted exhilaration? Woe was him, why had not that foolish Nan fixed upon another cavalier—why had she insisted on returning before the broad day and its safety?

He thought of the diamond brooch in his scarf, of the diamond buckles on his shoes, of his two watches and the snuff-box with the great emerald that his Grace of Marlborough had given his grandfather. He thought of the gold-hilted sword and its inestimable artistic worth, but, strangely enough, my Lord Damory never once thought of using it, though it lay in brave display on the seat before him.

He huddled himself in his cloak, and shrank back in his corner as far as possible from a detestable, rusty barrel, which his own special ruffian had thrust crashing towards him through the glass.

"How, Cousin Damory, have *you* no pistols? *Juste ciel,* where are your pistols?" cried Nan, in high, indignant tones.

She sat very upright; and, through the open window, over the head of her new, unwelcome visitor, a bright ray of moonlight showed a courageous crimson on either cheek. The footpad drew back to look at her through the holes of his filthy face cloth, dropping the pistol from its threat.

"Come, pretty bird—with such eyes as those you'll never need jewels," said his greasy voice of banter, plentifully interspersed with oaths. "I'd never hurry a lady—but business is business, and our business is of quick bargain, d'ye see. I'll have them diamonds from your ears, please, my lady——"

"Come, sir," said the less accommodating trader on the other side, "out with the shiners first, and *presto!* My barker has a trick of going off by itself if it's kept waiting—mark you!"

"Your sword, cousin, your sword!" shrieked Nan, in an ecstasy of exasperation, as she made a futile effort to pull up the window between herself and her assailant; and the ruffian on Damory's side, with a hoarse "Thanking you for the hint, ma'am," neatly culled the weapon in question from the cushion.

Here Lord Damory raised a plaintive objurgation, for the rim of the rusty pistol had touched his cheek.

"Give up your diamonds, for God's sake, Nan, and your necklace, too, or we shall both be slaughtered!" he groaned. He was diving for his purse with tremulous haste himself.

"You'd better step out, sir," said the man on Nan's side, throwing out the suggestion with a grin. "As for me, I should be loath to spoil a lady's beauty—but those earrings will come quick enough if I pluck them for myself." So saying, he stretched a grimy hand towards her face.

At this instant, above the oaths and shouts of the fighting servants outside and the frantic struggles of the horses—even as the ruffian made at Nan's necklace a plunge so greedy that the string broke and a milky shower rained over her brocades—there came a thunder of galloping hoofs, the crack of a pistol, then a shock which shook the coach on its springs. Cousin Damory's particular ruffian suddenly disappeared, hurled,

as it were, away from the window, his head striking against the broken glass and his pistol dropping upon Damory's lap. The pitiful escort seemed almost more alarmed than before this new development; but Nan, quick as thought, picked up the weapon and pointed it at her own momentarily arrested footpad. She pulled the trigger; there was a flash in the pan—nothing more, to her prodigious digust; for she had it then in her to kill. But behold! she was also delivered. A blade twice gleamed blue in the moonlight, then howls and curses took the place of oaths and shouts. The footman's honest, country voice might now be heard raised in exultation. The horses gave a wild plunge forward, then were again arrested. And then commanding accents called:

"Let the rascals run, Basil. We've settled three of them; 'twill suffice!"

Nan popped her head out of the window. There, as clear as day, she beheld two horsemen—one evidently a servant, the other as evidently a gentleman. The man's face was unknown to her; the gentleman was masked. She thought of Jim Devlin with a shudder that the highwayman himself had not evoked. But, as the gentleman dismounted, flinging his reins to the servant, she marked all at once that the stalwart figure of their rescuer was very different from the slight proportions of the mask who had tormented her so persistently.

He walked quickly round to the other side of the coach and briskly opened the door with his left hand, kicking the stunned footpad aside.

"Sir," said he, quietly, to the cowering Damory, "you will do me the favor to descend this instant."

The poor young nobleman now indeed believed that he had fallen from Charybdis into Scylla. The falcon had but robbed the kite of its quarry, it was clear; and matters were no better for the quarry; nay, worse! A filthy, truculent thief on foot was bad enough, but the gentleman of the road, on horseback, with his deadly elegance, with his beau's silken mask and his gleaming sword, was a still more alarming encounter. Cousin Damory clung to his seat with both hands. It seemed as if the coach walls, as if even Nan's presence were some kind of protection.

"Will you not descend, sir?" repeated the firmly polite newcomer.

And as the other still sat staring, immobile, teeth chattering, the supposed highwayman, with a laugh, reversed his sword and proceeded to dig him out with the hilt. A fine grip on the collar aided other hints. Lord Damory found himself standing, weak-kneed, on the road, beside the prostrate thief. The unknown, his sword under his arm, was surveying him with eyes that had (thought the agitated peer) a most sinister glow behind the visard.

"In sooth, sir," said the gentleman, at last, in tones that were like the sting of a whip, "the lady who has chosen *you* as escort on the road displayed a most prodigious discernment!"

From within the coach came a stifled cry. Anne fell back, covering her face with her hands.

"Is that your sword, sir?"

Damory jumped, glanced at the gold hilt that shone starlike on the ground where it had fallen from the footpad's hand, then nodded forlornly. No hope now for the diamond shoe buckle, the emerald snuffbox, the brooch, the watches!

Slowly then did the masked man sheath his own sword, and, stooping, pick up Damory's weapon of great price.

"It has a most elegant hilt," quoth he, holding it horizontally in both hands, "but fie upon it for a useless blade!"

Whereupon, with fingers of incredible strength, on a sudden movement of anger, he broke the said blade twice across his knee and flung the pieces contemptuously towards their owner; then handed him the hilt with an even greater air of contempt. And before the bewildered fop could gather his scattered wits sufficiently to realize what was taking place, the coach door was clapped to.

"Madam," said the stranger, "you may now proceed. Up with you, John. Drive on, George! Basil, my horse here!"

"Philip——" cried Nan, putting her face to the window, even as the coach began to roll.

But it is the etiquette of masks to deny their identity. And Philip Day answered her not by one word, but mounted and followed the equipage.

Lord Damory raised a dismal howl when it dawned upon him that coach and horseman were deliberately abandoning him on the waste lands of Fulham, in the awful hour before dawn, with three footpads, dead or wounded, for sole company! Clutching his valuable hilt, he set off running after the retreating wheels.

How he presently fell into the hands of the escaped party of the band; how he lost not only snuffbox, watches and brooches, but also his fine suit of clothes, his silk stockings and garters; and how, thereafter, finding that his very appearance at the clubs and about town excited inextinguishable laughter, he took a trip to the Continent, may be related by any who cares to write "The Fop's Progress."

Nan, in her coach, saw with mixed feelings London spring up beside her on each side in the gray dawn. She was longing for the moment when her new escort should dismount at the Kilcroneys' door, and, perforce, listen to her at last; and yet she dreaded that moment. It was perhaps the keenest humiliation of her life that she had suffered this evening. There had at least been the dignity of danger in her choice of Lord Sanquhar as a beau. But to aim secretly at exciting a husband's jealousy and to have selected so pitiable a rival that she became herself an object of derision—could fortune have provided a more cruel turn of the wheel?

Tears fell one by one, while, mechanically, she began to collect the scattered pearls of her celebrated necklace. Little as she cared for them this moment, they were his pearls, after all!

She had made a bag of her handkerchief, and it was full of the precious beads when the coach reached Mayfair and clattered down Hertford Street. And so she could not even dry her cheeks! Perhaps she was counting upon the effect of that tear-stained countenance. But, if so, when she alighted at the doorsteps, her disappointment must have been the greater, for now no escort was there.

Pausing in incredulous dismay upon the pavement, she looked up the street. Then, at the top of it, clear against the park trees that rose greenly in the early morning light, she beheld the silhouette of two horsemen. And as she looked, one of them raised his hat, swung it out with a fine salute, and was gone. Cruel, cruel! It was the third time she had been thus treated.

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE NEXT NUMBER.]

## THE MOCKING BIRD

HE lost his love once, ages and æons ago;
Since when, he mimics and mocks all song, that so
He may lure her back, he may let the lost one know.

RICHARD BURTON.

# FROST GRAPES

By Edna Kingsley Wallace

FROM a fresh, snapping blaze, too busy to stop and remember, or to say tentative things, the fire before which Betty and I were toasting our toes had burned down to the whispering stage, with intervals of silence. It was a condition favorable to confidences.

"There is something," I observed, "that I want very much."

"There is?" said Betty, responsively.

"Yes," said I, slowly; "very much, indeed."

"Can't you get it?" Betty's tone was politely sympathetic, but not much interested.

"I don't know," I replied, shaking my head dubiously.

"Why don't you find out?" she queried.

"Afraid," said I.

Betty surveyed me rather contemptuously, but with a shade more of interest.

"I mean I am so afraid of knowing I can't," I explained.

"You prefer a fool's paradise?"

"A fool's purgatory," I corrected. "It is very chastening."

"What is it?" she inquired, briefly.

"A girl," said I.

"Oh!" said she, sitting very still.

"She is a very nice girl," I continued.

"Of course."

"A particularly nice girl," I reiterated; adding: "I wish you knew her as well as I do."'

Did I detect the suggestion of an involuntary, little, well-bred sniff as Betty flourished, with quite her own inimitable air, the thing she calls a handkerchief?

"But," I went on, "there are times when I fear she is not for me."

"Then why don't you find out, and, if she surely isn't for you, stop wanting her?" demanded Betty. She is so practical in other people's affairs.

"Couldn't," I replied, laconically.

"But, Billie," she argued, "it is such a waste of force!"

"There is plenty more where this particular force came from," I answered; "and, besides, I never was economical."

"But you ought to be," she urged. Then, after a pause: "For, of course, you will get over it if you have to."

"Never," I maintained, with considerable emphasis.

"Bobby Hargous did," said Betty, meditatively, "and—why, they all get married in time."

"Well, I'm not Bobby Hargous, thank the Lord! nor the rest of them," I rejoined, fervently; adding: "Besides, it was sour grapes with them."

"The pot and the kettle!" exclaimed Betty. "Your grapes will be sour fast enough if you find you can't get them. And, Billie, if you stop to think of it, the sour-grape attitude helps one over lots of rough spots." She waxed enthusiastic. "Why, just think—you relax the will to obtain, just as the Delsarte people devitalize, and, behold! the trouble is over."

"But," I objected, "I don't want to devitalize or relax my will to obtain. I prefer to believe that the particular grapes I desire are sour only because they are not quite ripe for my plucking; a little—er—green, as it were."

Betty eyed me suspiciously. "Are you sure they are out of your reach at present?"

"Well, no," said I, slowly, measuring with my mind's eye the distance between

my chair and Betty's; "strictly speaking, they are not, and yet——"

"I don't believe you want them so very hard," murmured Betty, tentatively.

"Oh, yes, I do," I answered, decisively; "but not until they are ripe. I wish they would make haste."

"Perhaps," observed Betty, with a gleam, "perhaps they like being young and green and tender."

"Oh, but when they are green they are not tender," I protested.

"Are you sure?" she asked, giving me merely the tail of her eye. "You know they might be quite ripe on the other side—the one you don't see."

She was looking at the fire now, and in the dusk I could not quite make out her expression.

"There may be others," I conceded, with a good effect of misery. "Probably I don't shine warmly enough on the little grapes to be their sun."

"Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls," murmured Betty, with a sidelong glance in my direction.

Now, I cannot help the color of my hair, for, while I wasn't born with it—all of it—it was none the less thrust upon me by the accident of my relationship to a worthy aunt. So I maintained stoutly that my hair indicated that warmth of temperament of which I seemed to stand so much in need at present. "It will assist," I said, with dignity, "in ripening my—my——"

"Yield," suggested Betty, gazing at me with unfathomable eyes.

There was a moment of silence, in deference to the almost morbid quiet of the fire. Then Betty said, dreamily: "You men are so slow of perception sometimes."

"It is leap year," I suggested.

The fire sprang into a sudden blaze, and so did Betty; and when the latter subsided I was a mere gray ash. "Women," she said, oracularly—"nice women—would rather be pursued by a clumsy puppy dog, who chases his tail and doesn't know what to do with his feet, than to run after and catch a lion."

"How about sitting still and trapping the lion?" I inquired, as one in pursuit of information.

"The trap," maintained Betty, "is the device of sophistication and laziness, whoever sets it. Also, there would be no pleasure in catching and keeping anything that wanted to get away."

"But it wouldn't want to get away," I murmured.

"What wouldn't?" she demanded.

"Why, It—that is," said I, not to be caught napping, "what makes you think it would?"

I rose, and, after getting permission to light my cigarette, walked up and down the studio two or three times. Then I said: "I believe you are right. It is foolish to waste my energies in vain longings. I am going to devitalize and relax the will to obtain, and see how it works."

Betty nodded her head—a little doubtfully, I thought. Then she said: "You may light the candles, please. It seems rather gloomy since the fire burned low."

"Candles are very nice," I observed, proceeding in a leisurely manner to do her bidding; "they make such elusive, fascinating shadows."

"Yes," agreed Betty, "candles are very polite. They touch up the best things in a room and leave the others in courteous obscurity."

"They do," I said, dreamily. "Your profile against that shadowy background is delicious."

"We were speaking of *things*," said Betty, sedately.

"Now, gaslight," I resumed, "is too appallingly frank; it is like those tiresome people who tell you wholesome truths you would rather not know."

"And electric light," continued Betty, with increasing interest, "the kind that runs around the room under the—no, *over* the eaves of the ceiling, you know, is too inquisitive. It is searching and scientific and non-human. There are no half lights and no shadows."

"Nothing left to wonder about," I murmured.

Betty glanced about the studio, at the twinkling high lights in the piano, at the wavering shadows on the dull green walls, noted the gleam of a gilt-edged book, and nodded with satisfaction. "Candles are best," she said.

"Well," said I, "let us apportion these means of making outer darkness visible. Electricity for public places, gas for gossipy boarding houses, lamps for the industriously domestic, and candles for —friends."

"Very pretty," smiled Betty, "because it is part of the fun that candles and friendships flicker and leave so much to the imagination."

"But," I ventured, "think how edifying is the clear, steady radiance of the double burner of matrimony, protected from the draughts of chance by a common chimney."

"Yes," replied Betty, abstractedly. "I should want a Tiffany vase and shade."

"There are always the wedding presents," I suggested, diffidently; adding: "The water is boiling away its salts. Why don't you make the tea?"

When we had settled down to drink our tea I said, irrelevantly: "I believe I will ask her—the girl—to go to see Irving in 'Dante' next week. Do you think she would like to go? I suppose it will be rather gloomy."

Betty waited a surprised instant, then, without moving a muscle save such as were necessary for articulation, said, in a funny little society voice, very impersonal: "Why, of course she would like to go. It will be tremendously interesting."

We had read much of the "Divine Comedy" together, and at the idea of my taking anyone but her to see "Dante." Betty was—well, thoroughbred.

"And yet," I murmured, "perhaps I had better begin to cultivate the will to relax, and make up my mind I don't want my grapes."

I caught Betty eying me intently. She was wondering very hard, and it was difficult for me to remember that wondering was good mental exercise for people who didn't know their own minds.

"Perhaps—yes, perhaps it would be best," I continued, almost as if talking to myself.

Betty hastily swallowed what remained of her tea, and then exclaimed, with appalling vivacity: "Billie, you haven't heard that new song of mine, have you? I'm going to show you how it goes."

Betty writes very good songs, which get published.

"Do," I said, as cheerfully as I could. When Betty gets nervous and starts out to entertain me I am perfectly helpless. When she is simple and natural, and not too clever, I get on amazingly with her, but when she does pyrotechnical stunts and ground and lofty tumbling I look on and admire, but I become impersonal. Now, Betty plays extremely well and writes good verses, but when she tries to pluck the grapes of song from the vine of art she exhibits a funny little quavering voice that bleats like a stray lamb and tightens on high notes as if somebody had pulled the string. It is because I love Betty that I hate to hear her sing. So when she wobbled up to her final F sharp I said, promptly: "Very good, Betty. Excellent climax. Won't you please play me something? The 'Magic Fire,' say?"

"Of course it is absurd of me to try to sing," murmured Betty, casually.

"Yes," I replied, comfortably, "I wish you wouldn't. It seems to me that if you would only relax the will to obtain that unripe F sharp it would save you a lot of trouble."

"Pardon me for boring you," she said, stiffly.

"You do other things so well," I hastened to say. "Please play the fire music."

She played it—with more abandon and tenderness than usual, I thought, and I said so.

When she rose from the piano it was with tears in her eyes. Feeling my sympathy, she said: "Billie, I was cross with you when I began, but the 'Magic Fire' has burned it all out of me."

"Thank you, Betty," said I, raising her not unwilling hand to my lips. Then, looking at my watch: "I have an engagement with you to see Irving Wednesday evening, haven't I?"

"Why, I thought——" breathed Betty, with wondering eyes.

"Yes; so did I—two weeks ahead—in time to get good seats."

"But, Billie," she said, stanchly, "you

must take the other girl; you mustn't give up without trying. We have been talking nonsense. If you care, you must find out whether she cares, too. You—why, it isn't like you," she finished, indignantly.

"Betty," said I, taking her two hands in mine, "don't you understand, dear, that the girl is you—never anyone else?"

All she said was, "Why, Billie!" and two tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Are my grapes getting ripe?" I asked, softly.

Then she hid her face. I shall not say where. But her answer, though inarticulate, was entirely satisfactory. Presently she said, almost reproachfully: "Billie, I think your grapes needed the sunshine of *knowing* that you cared."

"Perhaps I was wrong," I replied, gently, "but it seemed to me that, as a preliminary to getting ripe, they needed the frost of not being quite sure. They are that kind."

"Perhaps," smiled Betty, with a touch of her usual mischief.

# PROTEST

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

TO sin by silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men. The human race
Has climbed on protest. Had no voice been raised
Against injustice, ignorance, and lust,
The inquisition yet would serve the law,
And guillotines decide our least disputes.
The few who dare, must speak and speak again
To right the wrongs of many. Speech, thank God,
No vested power in this great day and land
Can gag or throttle. Press and voice may cry
Loud disapproval of existing ills;
May criticise oppression and condemn
The lawlessness of wealth-protecting laws
That let the children and childbearers toil
To purchase ease for idle millionaires.

Therefore I do protest against the boast
Of independence in this mighty land.
Call no chain strong, which holds one rusted link.
Call no land free, that holds one fettered slave.
Until the manacled slim wrists of babes
Are loosed to toss in childish sport and glee,
Until the mother bears no burden, save
The precious one beneath her heart, until
God's soil is rescued from the clutch of greed
And given back to labor, let no man
Call this the land of freedom.

# A QUARTER-HOUR IN TRINITY

By Robert E. MacAlarney

THE automobile broke down in front of Trinity just after Trevano's chauffeur had made the turn from Wall Street into Broadway. It was the fag end of October, and Mrs. Trevano felt a trifle chilled and impatient, watching her husband potter about the front of the car and show strange familiarity with a mysterious heap of coils that until now had been meaningless to her. Along the sidewalk flowed a never-ceasing tide of messenger boys, who sauntered with envelopes in their grasp; bank clerks walking rapidly yet furtively, the chains of their leather check cases dangling ostentatiously; and anxious men who plunged out of one arcade to plunge as impetuously into another.

It was a Saturday, and she and Trevano had planned to beat the two o'clock train to Bayport, intending to be dressed for dinner before the Jerry Vaughans, Mrs. Stacey and Percy Winslow—who were coming down to golf over Sunday—had rattled up to the house in the station wagon. Her eyes turned from the crowded pavement to her husband with a sudden sympathy. It was, then, in this atmosphere of rude jostle that he worked.

Her own family had possessed social status as well as wealth ever since Peter Stuyvesant's peg-leg had clattered over the Dutch bricks to St. Mark's. With Horace Trevano it had been different. He represented the newer blood infused into New York's higher plane. Two generations back his forbears were making only a weak start upon the road to material comfort. But the Trevano stock was sound; and when success had found it, there was not wanting the balance to meet it fittingly. The man Norma Turnbull had married was accorded worthy of her by even the outer fringe of her acquaintance.

From the beginning there had been but one jarring element in his make-up. Try as she would to explain it away, she had seen that he was not instinctively superior in attitude to the people beyond their circle. During their engagement, when he had visited the Turnbull country place at Tuxedo, she had marked the grooms vote him good sort with the same alacrity displayed by Rawlins Richardson and Percy Winslow in the billiard room. And Trevano had seemed as appreciative of one approbation as the other. From the day she married him, his wife had watched daily for the recurrence of his foible, excusing it when she could, now and then resenting it more than she cared to admit, and once in a great while feeling ashamed of her mood, at which time she was amazingly tender with her husband, who knew there must be some explanation for her whim, and was puzzled because he lacked it.

The group of gazers about the automobile grew, as the minutes passed. That she was a target for observation did not in itself annoy Norma Trevano. She had the society woman's inbred disregard of what might be whispered when she alighted from her carriage during a morning's shopping, or while she was occupying an arena box at the Horse Show. She could—as could any of her intimates—look unmovedly at a class of hunters, while satin-waisted women with Western accent, anchored a foot or two beneath her in the prome-

nade, appraised the dog collar at her throat and the probable cost of her gown trimmings. Some day—a not very distant day—Norma Trevano believed that the growing thinness of the hedges which defined caste in America would render New York intolerable for the socially fit. When that day arrived she would go into eager exile with her fellows. Until then—society women being the only really consistent stoics—true to her inherited instinct, she remained calmly philosophic.

As she sat in the automobile, it came to her—and the knowledge rasped—that Trevano enjoyed the coarse contact of physical labor. Once she had watched him show an awkward stable hand how to curry a favorite roadster's legs. He had bent over, breathing regularly as he stroked, the habit of the man whose antecedents' horizon was the paddock fence. She had been stung by it. It was narrow, supersensitively critical, she knew. He radiated content and genuine happiness where she inspired only indifference, or, at the best, uneasiness. And yet, at times, she felt that she could learn to dislike him utterly for these things if she allowed her mood to expand.

Now he turned to her, gesturing with a small wrench. "I'm afraid we can't fix it," he said.

"Couldn't you leave the car with Henri?" she asked.

Trevano spoke to the man, wiping the grease from his fingers upon a cloth, which he tossed into the tonneau. Then he handed his wife to the pavement, and elbowed a way for her to the shelter of the building at the corner. Overhead Trinity's clock chimed the half hour before noon.

"Two hours to get to Thirty-fourth Street and Percy Winslow," he said. "I'll have to telephone for a machine to drag Henri home." He guided her across the street into a crowded drug store, where an incredible amount of business seemed to be transacting in a suffocatingly small space. Mrs. Trevano became detached from him in the glut by the soda-water counter. Then she saw him clutched from behind by a stout, red-faced man, whose silk hat was rubbed a very great deal the wrong way.

"You're the party I've been looking for," bellowed the stranger, whose thunderous tones were unheeded by the struggling customers at the package desk. "They told me at the office you'd gone to Long Island for over Sunday."

Trevano rescued his wife from the press. "Oh, I say," began the stout one, apologetically, "I didn't know you were with a lady."

"I want my wife to meet you," said Trevano. "Norma, this is Mr. Beamish."

The wrong-rubbed silk hat came off with as much of a flourish as circumstances permitted. "Delighted, Mrs. Trevano," said the stout man. He would have said more, but could not, breathing staccato instead. Norma Trevano bowed slightly, with a realization of annoyance. There was a troublous scent of heliotrope. It came from the stranger's handkerchief, which he was applying to his forehead.

"I'm waiting for a chance at the telephone," said Trevano. "Would you mind taking Mrs. Trevano over to Trinity, Beamish? It's too close in here."

"Delighted," responded Beamish, jovially enough. But the glance Norma Trevano caught leveled in her direction was a timid one. Inside the iron fence he paused, indicating by a jerky movement of the thumb a pile of grayish-brown stone. "That's where they buried Lawrence, the man who said 'Don't give up the ship.' And over there is the grave of John Watts, the hymn-book man." He spoke enlighteningly.

There were no other people in the yard. The few remaining vagrant leaves raced over the yellowed grass and the lichened stones. Here was quiet, the real quiet of ended things, with just beyond the snarl of the town's disquietude. Dimly she knew that the man with her was again speaking. "Most people that sees Trinity thinks it's pretty. Have you ever been here before, Mrs. Trevano?"

"My grandparents are buried here." With her answer she felt a sudden anger that the society of this man had been

thrust upon her. "Let us wait for Mr. Trevano in the church," she said. "It is chilly out here."

Beamish started clumsily. "What a brute I am to keep you standing in this gale!" he puffed. Eagerly he pulled open one of the vestibule doors for her entering, baring his head with a deliberate reverence as he followed.

The church was pleasantly warm, and empty save for two low-talking pew cleaners near the choir. With the closing behind her of the noiselessly swinging panel, Norma Trevano was conscious of a strangely born listlessness. She sank against the cushions of the last seat, throwing open her jacket at the throat. Beamish stood uncomfortably, shifting his hat. The murmur of the pew cleaners might have been the buzzing of bees far down the nave. The deepened dusk of the clearstory was here and there slashed by a purpled or carmined shaft from the northern windows. She could see upon the wall opposite the dull yellow of a brass memorial tablet. Given the choir boys and congregation, all this would have possessed only the atmosphere of the typical religious inclosure. Yet, empty, a trifle dusty, stripped of all save the innate flavor of its sanctity, it assumed a new meaning. Indeed, if the red-faced man had not been beside her she would have knelt.

"Sacred to the memory of a loving wife." She picked out the words, letter by letter, from the brass tablet. It was grotesquely ordinary and commonplace, she knew; but she could not help asking herself if they would ever write that upon a brass tablet for her. Was there a place for such a thing as a loving wife in the whirl of town living?

"Your husband must have got tangled up with a ticker somewhere. The market's sort of uneasy to-day." Beamish was speaking, with the manner of one who feels that silence has existed sufficiently long. "I'm afraid, too, that he was sorry to have me run across him. I've been trying to find him for a week. Why, Mrs. Trevano, I'm just cram-full, jammed up to the muzzle, with thanks that I've got to unload. And he's been trying to dodge me. I know it."

Mrs. Trevano gazed at him wonderingly. But he was too absorbed in speech now to be uneasy because of her regard. "He's told you all about it, of course," he went on. "A man always tells his wife the decent things he does. But you don't know what it meant to me and Mame. Even he don't know that, really. You remember when that smash came in Consolidated Electric last September?" He turned to her inquiringly, and she nodded. There did not seem to be anything else just then for her to do. "It wasn't my fault that they sewed me up while I was at home with Mame—my wife's got spinal trouble, you know. She needs a heap of nursing."

"Ah! I'm sorry," murmured Mrs. Trevano.

"I'd left a half-baked clerk in charge," continued Beamish. "When I got back to the office I found that in forty-eight hours he'd made junk out of the entire list I traded in. So it was ten thousand on the jump, or go to the wall, with no more money for Mame's doctor bills, and the boy back from Amherst, where he's getting the learning and the breeding his dad didn't have the chance to get."

Beamish drew from his pocket a bulging leather case, taking from it a piece of white paper. "I've got it all here for him," he said, patting the check lovingly. "And there's more in the bank when they've taken that much out; and Mame's doctor says she'll be well enough to travel to Bermuda by Christmas. That's what your husband's ten thousand did for the Beamishes, Mrs. Trevano. He handed it out to me just the same as if I'd been one of his clubmen pals. That's the part that gets into you when you've come up from the bottom halfway, and you're lying awake at nights planning how your son can climb up the other half."

The man's face was wreathed in a smile, which grew into a suppressed chuckle. "They was betting him ten to one over luncheon at the Savarin that he'd never get his ten thousand back," he said. "Billy, the head barkeep, told me."

A gust of cold air streamed to the

pew as the side door opened. Mrs. Trevano buttoned her jacket. "It is Horace," she said. "He is looking for us." Beamish turned guiltily. He pressed the check into her hand. "Do me a favor," he whispered, all his newly born sureness of himself vanishing. "Somehow, since I've told it all to you—all that Mame and me feels—I can't say it over again. You give it to him, will you?"

Trevano bore down upon them before she could reply, and she crumpled the check into her glove. "Ah! there you are," said her husband. "I couldn't see you at first, coming in out of the glare."

They moved out into the brisk wind again. "I guess I'll have to trot on," said Beamish. Mrs. Trevano watched him as he was swept away in the sidewalk current. She marked, with an inward wrench which was real, that his bulky shoulders were covered by a coat worn threadbare and shiny, and that his silk hat was rubbed the wrong way mainly because it was past rubbing the right. "He asked me to give you this," she said. Trevano took the crumpled check almost shamefacedly. "Beamish talks a great deal. It's his worst fault," he answered.

"That's the grave of Lawrence, the man who said 'Don't give up the ship.' And over there lies buried John Watts, the hymn-book man." Mrs. Trevano smiled as she mimicked the curb broker's mortuary mistake, and her husband glanced at her, relieved.

"We can just make the 'Aspic' before the noon crush," he said. "Why, it will be as good as a play to you, Norma. Everyone that's worth while lunches once or twice a week at the 'Aspic.' Then we'll drive uptown."

It was at the headlong entrance to a French basement wine cellar, a block or two off Broadway, that he paused. The place was more than half full, with tables ranged along racks of dusty bottles. Dishes were being snatched from a tiny kitchen bar, and their chairs were whisked from beneath the cloth by a mustached waiter, who addressed Trevano by name, and filled the water glasses with a flourish. Mrs. Trevano noticed a dozen men nod to her husband.

Ten minutes later, with toasted mushrooms and white wine before them, he was saying: "It's a little place, Norma. But it's more cosmopolitan than Delmonico's and more Bohemian than Little Hungary. It's a club to the men who come here. Over there is Burbank, the man who writes the editorials for the back page of the *Express*. The little, bearded chap with the eyeglasses is 'Ike' Gregory, the best police reporter in New York, and the one that ran down the Seventy-second Street murder clews. You couldn't toss a coffee spoon ten feet without hitting an author or an artist. The tall man joking with Madame Gelet at the cashier's desk is Winthrop, the famous corporation attorney. He won't touch a case unless there's a twenty-thousand-dollar retainer in it."

Mrs. Trevano sipped her coffee, and reflected upon what the Jerry Vaughans would say if they should see her through this mist of pipe and cigar smoke. The waiter spoke as he laid down the check. "Louis, M'sieur Trevano, he is arrive safe. I have it in one letter from Bordeaux. He is thank you ver' much for the passage money, and he will repay surely when he is well."

Trevano flushed as he brushed aside the little speech the man was reciting, his napkined hand upon his heart. "That is all rot," said Trevano. "Burbank, Gregory and some of the rest of us paid the passage home for a sick chef. He'd have died on Madame Gelet's hands if we hadn't done it. It was nothing."

"Pardon, m'sieur," said the waiter. "It was one first class for the passage."

As they made their way past the crowded tables, Madame Gelet called from behind her wire screen: "*Au revoir*, M'sieur Trevano. And news from Louis. He is arrive safe. And he say 'Thank you' from the heart."

"We ought to have had luncheon uptown." Trevano spoke half angrily, as they walked toward the cab stand at Tryon Row. His wife felt that he was annoyed. "I have not been bored, Horace, if that is what you mean," she said.

The runabout met them at the station

with the wagonette, and the Jerry Vaughans and the others drove on ahead, Percy Winslow calling back invitations for a race. It was just past twilight, and Trevano let the cob have its own gait. At the bottom of the hill before the turn into the lane, a child was digging his small fists into his eyes and crying.

"Why, it is the head gardener's baby," said Mrs. Trevano. Her husband handed her the reins and dropped over the wheel. "What's the matter, kid?" he asked, lifting the struggling child.

"They wouldn't give me a ride, and I'm afraid of the dark," wailed the boy, his face toward the vanished wagonette.

"We'll drop him off at the cottage, Norma," said Trevano. He placed the child in her lap and they drove on. The boy nestled comfortably in the new embrace. "Oh, Horace, if only little Dick had lived!" Mrs. Trevano whispered.

The cob paused to breathe at the end of the rise, and her husband put the boy down in the path leading to the yard gate. He whistled out of tune as he climbed back into the runabout.

Trevano came downstairs while the rest were gathered around the fire. Percy Winslow was clamoring for dinner through a brass phonograph megaphone. "Ahoy, Horace," he called, "observe the genial hearth. I put in that applewood backlog myself, and I'm proud of the job." They were all very merry after the drive in the keen air.

Mrs. Vaughan made room beside her upon the settle. "I've made Norma a promise," she said, gayly.

"What is it?" asked Trevano.

The butler appeared in the doorway. "Dinner is ready," cried Mrs. Trevano. Her husband noticed the relieved look in her eyes.

"I say," he protested. "It's worse form, you know, to half finish a story."

"Come on, Horace," said Percy Winslow. "It's only something about a brass tablet in a church. I heard them talking it over."

"A brass tablet?" repeated Trevano.

His wife slipped her fingers beneath his arm. "This isn't your day for understanding, Horace," she said. "It is mine."

## TO YOUTH

FAREWELL,
For you must go; and every sweet
Of glamour, mystery, moonlit night,
And joy akin to pain—
Shall by your ruthless hand, your glancing feet,
Be borne afar where darkened waters meet,
Whose tide turns not again.

Farewell,
For you must go; ah, comrade dear,
We trod together, you and I,
The primrose path for many a year;
But now the parting of the way is here—
Farewell,
For you must go!

ROSALIE ARTHUR.

# THE EXCEPTION

By Owen Oliver

YOU can only be sure of one thing about a woman—that you can never be sure of her. Every man makes one exception to this rule. My exception was Mrs. Lindley-Masterton.

I met her first just after she married Lindley-Masterton, the banker. Her people married her, but she was fond of him in a filial way. She was nineteen then, and twenty-two when he died; a tall, dark girl, with rather a big nose, and very big eyes. She was not really beautiful, but she had a nice head—inside and out—and the "way" with men. She could have had half a dozen offers before she was out of mourning, but she prevented them tactfully. She was not a flirt.

"Don't you want to get married again, Vi?" I asked her one evening. We were in the habit of putting things plainly.

"I don't want not to," she owned frankly, "but I want a *man*."

"It's an extinct race, almost. Killed by civilization. It's a pity Waring's married. He'd just have suited you."

"Waring?" She adjusted a bracelet carefully. "Ye-es. Do you know, I'm worried about him." She had an unfortunate gift of sympathy. I called her the missionary.

"What's Waring to you or you to Waring?" I inquired.

"A misquotation is generally misapplied!" She looked straight at me with her great eyes. Her power lay there. "Mr. Waring is something to me, because he is, as you say, a man; because he is strong, and clever, and kind. He is something to me, because I am a woman, and he is in danger."

"Umph! I suppose I may smoke? Thanks. You mean Mrs. Vane?"

"She is a bad woman, Dick." I puffed my cigar slowly.

"Yes," I agreed, "she is a bad woman. I do not condemn women lightly. His wife is worth a dozen of her."

"A dozen bad women don't make a good one! Honestly, I have no sympathy with Mrs. Waring."

"It isn't her fault if his fancy strays."

"It is a woman's business to keep her husband's fancy from straying. A man is never constant if he can help it!"

"Masculine fidelity is a feminine virtue!"

"Exactly! When only one woman counts, he is faithful."

"He is apt to count the wrong one. Probably Waring will be faithful to—Mrs. Vane!"

"Not if I can help it." She set her lips in a way that I know. "Dick—I like Waring. I am going to save him from that creature."

"'Tis an awful thing to play with souls!" There is no need to misquote Browning.

"Ah! That was a man who tried. He made a muddle of it—of course. There's a difference in the man to be saved, too. Waring is older—old enough to know better. I don't blame him, mind. His wife is—inadequate. A woman has no right to bore a man, even if she's his wife. He wants some one who'll be a *chum!*"

"As we are?" I suggested.

"I meant in the ordinary mortal way!" She smiled fascinatingly. "There's no harm in his having a chum, if she's nice. *Then* she won't let him

run away with her—*I* won't have him run away with Mrs. Vane. There!"

She tossed her head at me defiantly, and I blew smoke rings.

"Don't put me up as the devil's advocate. *I* don't wish him to run away. But there's something to be said for minding one's own business."

"A woman can't mind her own business."

"She needn't mind everybody's else?"

"Right and wrong are everybody's business."

"Everybody's business is nobody's business."

"A woman has no principles."

"No. A woman has morals, but no morality."

"A man has morality—but no morals!"

I allowed her a verbal triumph, and took my hat.

The next evening I dropped in at the Hathaway's. I found her engaged in an animated conversation with Waring. She was obviously very much in earnest. There was a pink flush on each cheek, and her eyes were like lamps. She paused to think sometimes before she spoke—a rare thing with her—and once she passed her handkerchief over her forehead, as if she was making an effort that exhausted her. He was impassive, but interested; possibly a little annoyed. I caught what he said once. "Argument never prevails in anything that matters." A man has learned something when he knows that!

When I finished my rubber of bridge, she rose and came over to me.

"Take me home, Dick," she begged, "I'm *dead* tired."

I got her cloak and carriage, jumped in with her, and held my peace for five minutes or more. Then she drew a long breath, and I thought she wanted me to speak.

"Soul-saving is hard work," I ventured.

She nodded. I could just see her in the dark.

"I don't know. I—don't—know. When a man has once made up his mind—— A man's strength is his weakness."

"A woman's weakness is her strength," I suggested.

She looked toward me quickly. I thought that she was a trifle flushed, and a trifle displeased.

"Of course," she said, "I know what you mean. I—I did not wish to rely on my 'weakness.' I did not think that *you* would wish it. I wanted him to do right for—for right's sake. Of course, it may have no influence on him, what I said. If it doesn't——" She looked at me defiantly. I shrugged my shoulders.

"Exit the missionary?" I was a trifle displeased also.

"Exit the missionary; and enter—Violet Lindley-Masterton." She touched my arm. "You'd call me a nice woman, wouldn't you, Dick?"

"A perfectly delightful woman."

"Would you? On your honor—yea or nay?"

"Yea," I vowed.

"Then I am going to show him what a nice woman is. If he can stand her after that—exit Violet Lindley-Masterton!"

"And?"

"Re-enter the missionary—I shall speak right out to him—tell him what he is going to do—say that I will not condemn or acquit him, because he knows himself what is right and wrong; only that I entreat him, for the sake of all that is worthy in women and men, to do the right—I will do it, Dick! You think I'm vain, or a fool?"

"Neither; but I've no faith in missionary influence."

"Even a man has a sense of right and wrong."

"Right and wrong stop—at a point."

"What point?" she asked, sharply.

"A point where there's only one way. A man has a code of honor, Vi."

"A code of honor—for dishonorable things! A man is the most—— Don't let me talk any more, Dick. I mustn't be rude to *you*. Aren't you coming in? Why? Oh! You must. You shall sing, and I'll play for you like an angel. You aren't cross with me, are you?"

I did not meet either of them for three days, then I went to the Mellor's ball. He had several dances with her.

She was smiling and coquetting with her fan—a new woman, except the eyes. I thought she looked absolutely charming, and told her so. When you think nice things of a woman, it is best to tell her.

"I am glad you think so," she acknowledged, her voice was a trifle uneasy. "Only—it wasn't you I was trying to charm, my kind old Dick."

"In my case no effort was necessary. Is he adamant?"

"No-o. Things are coming to a crisis with them, Dick. I wasn't in time."

"How do you know?"

"As if a woman knows how she knows! I *do* know. It is what you expected. He feels bound to her—I am engaged in saving him from his sense of honor! Thank Heaven a woman hasn't a code of 'honor.'"

"Her code is inferior to a man's, but she sticks to it better."

"It is the nature of a woman to stick to things."

"Especially to a man."

She drew a deep breath.

"Anyhow," she said, "I am going to stick to him."

The next afternoon I was playing billiards at the club, when an express messenger brought a note.

I want you at once. VI.

I put down my cue and went. Violet was sitting over the fire, with her chin on her hand. She nodded without looking up.

"Dick?"

"Yes?"

"It's to-night."

"*What* is to-night?"

"They're—going away. He called this afternoon, and——" she hesitated.

"*He* told you!"

"He didn't say: 'Mrs. Lindley-Masterton, Mrs. Vane and I are eloping to-night by the seven-fifteen,' if that's what you mean. He said—— It doesn't matter what he said. I understood. He knew that I understood. Oh!"

She clasped her hands suddenly, and I patted her shoulder.

"I know what he said, Vi. He told you that he had felt your influence; that it had been an education to him to know a good woman——"

"How did you know?" There was a sob in her voice.

"*I* have felt; been educated—I was a poor pupil, but *she*——" She caught my arm suddenly.

"I am *sure* she wasn't as good as you," she declared. "I expect *she* felt, and was educated. A good woman is not so good as a good man. Tell me about her." I shook my head.

"A man is entitled to one secret from his dearest friend. I had no reason to suppose that she cared for me in—in *that* way—I never dreamed that she would—I am constant because, as you said, the others don't count. Well, he told you that he would like to be better now that he knew you, but he'd passed the turning point. It is sometimes right to go on with wrong. He asked you not to think worse of him than you could help. Was that it, Vi?"

"He said," she sobbed, "that if anyone could have saved him, *I* should have done it; that perhaps the thought of me would keep him from being as bad as he might have been; that if ever he had a moment of goodness, then he would venture to think of me. Dick!" she jumped up, "I must save him. I *must*." She rang the bell. "The carriage, at once."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I am going to *her*. I shall say that I have a message from him; that he will not go. You think I am mad?"

"No," I said; "but——"

"Don't say I am not to go, Dick."

"I have no power over you."

"Oh, Dick! You have—the power to think badly of me."

I drew a long breath.

"No," I said, "I haven't!" She caught my hand.

"It is—a man's soul!" she cried. "You don't believe in souls?"

"Only for women."

"Hush! We are face to face with things to-night, Dick. It is his career, his happiness, his *honor*. You believe in *them*. Tell me, am I not to go?"

We were silent for some moments. Even the ticking of the tiny clock seemed obtrusive. Then I raised her fingers to my lips.

"You are a very, very good woman, Vi," I said. "Shall I come with you?"

"Thank you, Dick, no. You couldn't come to her; and he will take it better without you. I must go to him afterwards, at the junction where he expects her. If only I *could* serve him—— Say, God prosper me, Dick."

"God prosper you, dear," I said. "I think He will. Good-by."

"Good-by, Dick—kind old Dick."

There was a mist in my eyes as I walked down the street.

"She's in love with him," I muttered. "My poor old Vi. I wonder if she knows?" Then I went to Radcliffe's, and played the eternal bridge. I revoked once, and took my partner's trick three times.

The next morning I strolled into the club about eleven o'clock. Newman peered at me over his paper, and beckoned me.

"Have you heard?" he whispered. "Waring has gone off with——" he paused.

"Mrs. Vane!"

"No—Mrs. Lindley-Masterton."

I went home, and locked myself in my bedroom, and sat with my head in my hands. The tears came through my fingers—I hadn't cried since my mother died. I got up at last, and fetched her photograph from the dining room, and put it beside the other on my dressing table.

"There will only be kind eyes to look at you in here," I told it. "Dear old Vi!" Then I thought that she would wish me to comfort her mother. They lived together. So I went round there.

I was somewhat inarticulate when the maid opened the door. She showed me into the drawing room; and there, working at my promised slippers, was—Violet. I staggered, and caught at a chair, and she sprang to her feet and grasped my arm.

"Dick!" she cried. "What is it, Dick?"

"They said that you—had run away—with Waring," I gasped. My breath was uncertain. "I suppose they saw you at the junction."

She laughed unsteadily.

"I went one station with him. I was afraid he would do some mischief to himself—but he promised me—— He has gone away for a time. Oh, Dick! And you thought that I——" she wiped her eyes.

"I ought to have known," I said, humbly.

"Yes. You ought to have known."

"You see, I—I thought you were in love, Vi."

She looked me right in the eyes.

"I *am* in love," she cried, "*dreadfully* in love. But not with Waring!"

The world seemed to stop turning for a moment. Then I caught her in my arms.

She gave me another photograph for the mantelshelf, so that I might keep the one on the dressing table.

"You can keep that," she said, "to look at when I run away! You know you can never be sure of a woman! You told me that was your golden rule."

I hold still to my rule in an indifferent sort of way. It is not the rule that matters in such things, but the exception!

# IN CINDERELLA'S SHOES

By Mary Stewart Cutting
Author of "Little Stories of Married Life," "Heart of Lynn," Etc.

AS the clock struck nine from the church tower in the square, Miss Margaret Woodford started, and looked musingly out of the window beside her at the lights of the city, and thence to the heap of shining apparel that lay spread out on the bed in the small fourth-story room. Then, as if making a decision, she pushed aside the proof sheets that lay stacked up before her, removed both the pen and the pencil which had decorated her hair, and rose from the table by which she had been sitting, with slight intermission, ever since she had come home from the office and a hard day's work, four hours ago.

At the moment she was a slender, brown, unnoticeable woman, in a businesslike, short, brown walking skirt and flannel shirt-waist, but it was a dainty lady of fashion, in a trailing robe of white silken stuff, with white neck and arms, and a knot of yellow velvet on her shoulder and in her dark hair, whose sparkling brunette face was reflected in the little toilet glass an hour later.

She pinned the lace in the front of her bodice with an oddly-shaped, old-fashioned topaz brooch, that had been her grandmother's, and a wistful smile hovered around her mouth, for she used to have to beg to wear it in the old days when she was a happy girl in her Virginia home.

"I look all right, but I wonder if, after all, it is foolish of me to go?" was her unspoken comment, as she flung a white crêpe shawl around her head and shoulders, burnoose fashion, and, gathering up her fan and gloves, ran down the dingy boarding-house stairs to the carriage that awaited her.

She had not dared to count up the precious money spent on that carriage and the gown, with its dainty equipments—to what end? What right had a hard-working, solitary business woman with such things? What place could there be for her in society? With Emma de Lacy's invitation to the New Year's reception had come a sudden and uncontrollable longing for a little luxury—a luxury that embraced not only the soft raiment and the pleasures of the rich, but the sight of old friends—the luxury of a little love. Old friends! That was the cord that underneath all was drawing her. She was lonelier than anyone knew. Would they be glad to see her? There was Captain Gordon, for instance, who had just returned with his regiment; he might not even remember her. He had been such a dear boy, only, after all, she would not marry him, and she had never quite known whether she was wise then or not.

"Why, Miss Woodford! Can it really be you? Where are you going on New Year's eve? Wait—let me help you in."

She turned on the carriage step, laughing, half shamefacedly, as she looked up at the very tall young man, with a short, pointed beard and merry eyes, who was bending over her.

"Yes, Mr. Austin, it's I! I'm in Cinderella's shoes to-night. I'm going to a ball. Don't tell it at the office to-morrow."

"I don't see why not." He gazed at her with surprised admiration that brought the color to her cheeks. "You're

*awfully* swell! I'm on my way home to dress, for I'm in for the social act myself to-night. I wish it combined with yours."

"I wish so, too," she replied, longingly. "I'm glad you're here to start me off, anyway. Jump in and let me take you to your corner; it's on my way. I felt so lonely and unsponsored before you came, though I'm going to meet old friends to-night—people whom I haven't seen for years."

"I think it was very unkind of you to have Cinderella plans, and not let me know," he retorted. "I come to you with all mine. As for your old friends, I don't wonder the thought of them depresses you. I feel in advance that I should hate them."

"Oh!" she laughed outright. "Please don't be so radical. But I have read wretched stories of women like me, who have scrimped and saved for one night's enjoyment, only to be cruelly snubbed and neglected, and come back home with all the heart crushed out of them. That would be sad. Do you think me very foolish to go. Am I making a mistake?"

"*Did* you scrimp and save?" he asked, irrelevantly.

"Oh, yes, yes! I didn't care to go in halfway, poor-relationy clothes; I wanted them to be *real*. I love pretty things. Are you smiling because I never wear them?"

He leaned forward and clasped both her small, gloved hands together in his large one.

"No; I'm grinning horribly because I've got to leave you to your old friends, and I don't want to. There's my corner. Good-by!"

"Good-night!" she called after him, as the carriage rolled away, leaving him on the sidewalk, and then she sank back in the cushions, feeling indescribably enlivened and gay. There was always something bracing about Jack Austin.

The De Lacys' drawing room was full as she swept into it, and Emma de Lacy herself, stout, good-natured and homely, in green velvet and diamonds, received her with affectionate impressiveness.

"Jasper," she said to her husband, "here's Margaret Woodford; we ought to consider ourselves very lucky. I'm glad you've emerged from your shell for once, Meg; it's ridiculous for a woman of your age and looks to drop out of society. Imagine it! You were my bridesmaid at sixteen! How terribly early we Southern girls used to come out; *my* daughter will be in the schoolroom for years yet. Let me introduce Mr. Julian. Why, *dear* me! What am I thinking of? You and George Julian are old friends, of course?"

"You haven't changed in the least, Miss Margaret," said Mr. Julian, gallantly. He was very stout, and very red, and very shiny, and Margaret felt that she was gazing at him with suspicion. Was *this* the George Julian who had sung to his guitar for her in his slim young college days?

"I'm awfully glad to see you," he was saying. "How it brings the old times back! This New Year's reception of Mrs. de Lacy's is a lovely idea. My oldest boy will be fourteen in May—seems odd for me to have a boy that age, doesn't it? He's very clever—very, so his teachers tell me."

"That must please you," said Margaret.

"Ah, yes—yes, it does. He takes after his mother—intellectual, you know; not like his dad. I'm fond of golf, and that sort of thing. Never cared for books. My wife isn't here to-night; she's home with the neuralgia. She's a great sufferer from nervous neuralgia. She's taken chloral, and she's taken phenacetine, and she's taken morphine, and she's taken every treatment you can think of, from Swedish to Mesopotamian, and none of it does—one—bit—of—good! The doctor says the strength of her nerves is something wonderful—you can't control 'em."

"How—how sad!" said Margaret, with wandering eyes.

"Margaret! Margaret Woodford!" Somebody clutched at her effusively—a tall, sallow woman, with a high roll of gray hair, black eyebrows and very bare neck, surmounting an airy toilet of spangled *chiffon*.

"It's good to see you again, Meg; you don't change at all. How do you man-

age it? Just see how gray my hair is—but everyone says it's becoming to me. Do you write as much as ever? Why don't you come to see us? We lunch at one."

"I can't make calls, Kitty," said Margaret, smiling. "Writing is only half my work. I'm a very busy woman, you know."

"Busy—don't speak of it!" said her friend. "Mamma and I haven't had a minute to ourselves lately. The house was done over while we were abroad, and we've been refurnishing since we came home. Such work! I never was so tired in my life; in the midst of the season, too, with all one's engagements. I said yesterday that if I could ever get an hour to myself again—— Why, I haven't even had time to get my gowns fitted."

"That must be very trying," said Margaret, with a whimsical thought of the office, and the presses that one could hear rumbling away for dear life, and the worn look of hurry on every human creature's face, and the pile of work under her desk lid, and on her table at home, and the page of the Saturday issue for which she was responsible.

"I'm *so* glad I saw you before I left. I'm going on to the Fosters' ball, in a minute. Odd idea, having this kind of a New Year's reception, wasn't it? So like Emma. Just look at John Sterns over there! Hasn't *he* changed, my dear? You'd never know him. They say that his wife—— That was Molly Robinson who bowed to you just now. She tells everyone her husband is home with the grip, but it is really delirium tremens. He's taken the Keeley cure twice. You recognize Harry Tarleton, don't you? The large man over there with the smile. He embezzled something last year, but it was hushed up, and you're supposed not to know it. Don't you think Alice Baltimore looks perfectly *disgraceful* in that gown? There's mamma beckoning to me. Good-by! Now, do come and see us; we lunch at one."

Before an hour was over Margaret had been welcomed, embraced and treated to endless reminiscences between the lobster à la Newburg and the *biscuit glacé*. She wished people would stop commenting on her looks, and she listened longingly to the music in the next room, where there was dancing. The pulse of it stirred in her veins, but she tried to pay attention to Lizzie Sanderson, who used to be Lizzie Gordon.

"You haven't changed a bit, Margaret, and I want James to see you. He used to be awfully in love with you—he never would have married Clara if you would have had him. He's here to-night; you know he has just returned from the Philippines with the regiment. His wife died two years ago; she was an invalid for a long time. Perhaps it's just as well that you haven't married yet."

"Possibly," said Margaret, with an irrepressible smile, she knew not at what.

"Do come and see me. Doesn't it seem odd to think of me with five children? My eldest, Darwin, is so like James? Have you good health, Margaret?"

"*Very*," said Margaret, rising and looking wildly around the room, thronged with men and women gayly talking. Had she wasted money and aspirations for this? Oh, those violins in the next room! Unconsciously her feet kept time.

"Ah!" said her companion, rising also, "there is James. Margaret, he is coming straight to you. I think I'd better leave you two together." She gave a little laugh that brought a hot flush to Margaret's cheeks.

Yes, it was James Gordon. Time, who had changed so many—what had it done to him?

Miracle of miracles! It was the same boyish figure that she remembered so well, with the same immature boyish face, in spite of the very slight tinge of gray in the locks that curled above it. It was even the same high, boyish voice that said:

"Miss Woodford—Margaret! This is indeed a pleasure." He laughed a little spasmodically. She remembered the habit well. Heaven save the mark, she had used to think it engaging!

"I wonder if you're as happy at this meeting as I am, Maggie?"

"How happy is that?" she asked, with perfunctory sprightliness.

He bent over her affectionately.

"Let us sit down here in this quiet corner. How well, how *very* well, you look!" He laughed again. It was the old manner—the manner for one, only.

"Have you forgotten that you were my sweetheart once, Maggie? We used to have a great deal to say to each other then. Do you remember the ball we drove to one New Year's night?"

"Yes," she said, scanning him wonderingly, for this was the worst thing that had happened to her that evening. Time had not changed him at all; it had passed him by, and that which is grace to a woman unaccountably belittles and cheapens a man. There was no dignity to him, no solidity. Margaret felt ashamed. Old friends with whom one is no longer in sympathy—what real pleasure is there in meeting them? There is only a heartache.

The way he was looking at her now—had he looked like that at his dead wife? She did not know what Captain Gordon said, or what she answered; he was talking, talking, talking——

She turned to meet Jack Austin's astonished and delighted gaze, and was amazed to feel the throb her heart gave. Ah! she was not only the relic of a dead past. The work at the office, the community of interest, the real everyday spirit of living—all seemed to come back to her with Jack Austin's face.

Almost without knowing it, her hand was on his arm, and they were walking off together into the ballroom.

She waltzed as a Southern girl can, but how had he divined it?

"This is what I call luck!" he murmured, as they threaded through the crowd again to a nook by the stairway, behind the palms. "I was getting absolutely *moony* for you this evening. Why didn't you let me know that you were coming here, of all places? We've lost two precious hours, and I've got something to tell you."

"You always have," she retorted, joyously, "and it never amounts to anything."

"It does this time." He looked at her with a cool intentness, under which her cheeks reddened. "I hope you've had enough of your old friends, if they're like the one I took you from. Idiot! Margaret, why have you tried to hide yourself all the time we've been together? I've had my glimpses, but now I've found you out for good. Underneath your demure business mask, Margaret, you're frivolously young!"

She laughed, and said, with a whimsical pathos:

"I know it, but I'm ashamed of it. And you mustn't call me Margaret—you are younger than I."

"Am I? I don't believe it. I have ten years the advantage in looks and experience. What difference does a year or two either way make? We're neither of us in our teens. But we suit each other." He drew a long breath. "*How* we suit each other!"

"That is just your fancy," she flashed back at him.

"Perhaps," he answered, quietly. "I take very strong fancies sometimes. I have one now that I care for you, and you care for me—whether you know it or not. I've a fancy to have a wife who is brave and sweet and beautiful, and named Margaret. I've a fancy that I should like to work for her, and 'scrimp and save' myself to buy her pretty things. I've a fancy that the dearest girl in the world is lonely, in spite of all her bravery." He stopped, and his quick hand pressed hers furtively as he turned with careless manner to defend her from the observation of the outer world. "Margaret—Margaret, darling! You *mustn't* cry—not till I can put my arms around you!"

# IN FRIENDSHIP'S NAME

By Joseph C. Lincoln
Author of "Cap'n Eri," "Cape Cod Ballads," Etc.

GAIUS TUBMAN did not look like a man who, a few weeks before, had been on the verge of taking up his residence in the village almshouse. In fact, Mr. Tubman, as he settled back in the haircloth rocking-chair in his room at the Travelers' Rest, placed his lame foot upon a stool and lit his cheroot—ten cents per package of fifteen—appeared to be well satisfied with himself and his surroundings.

Through the open window he saw the few houses on the "main road" of East Harniss, the clump of pines on Ryder's Hill, and the ocean beyond it. Also he saw his particular friend, Mr. Elkanah Berry, drifting slowly up the front walk, with a weather-beaten straw "sundown" on his head, and that portion of his countenance not covered by whiskers shaded with a gloom unspeakable.

"Ship ahoy, Elkanah!" hailed Gaius, cheerfully.

Mr. Berry glanced toward the window, nodded, and tramped heavily up the steps. A moment later he slouched into the room, and, after shutting the door with elaborate care, flung himself into another rocker and groaned aloud.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Tubman. "Dyspepsy both'rin' you ag'in? Brace up; mebbe 'tain't so bad's it looks. Have a *se*gar."

His friend gloomily accepted the cheroot, raked a match across the arm of the rocker, and observed, enviously:

"Gosh! you're prosp'rous lookin'! Wish my fust cousin would die and leave me two thousand dollars."

A relative of Mr. Tubman's had, by leaving this world at a convenient time, and without a will, rescued his only heir from the pauperism already mentioned.

"I wisht he would, if 'twould make you look any more pleasant," was the reply. "Your face would stop the town clock if 'twan't stopped already. What ails you?"

Mr. Berry glanced at the door, and then, rising, closed the window. Then he drew his chair closer to that occupied by the capitalist, and said, in a throaty whisper:

"Ga'us, you 'member that time I lent you the ten dollars?"

Mr. Tubman looked suspicious, but he grunted assent.

"Well," went on the gloomy one, "you said then that if at any time there was anything in this world you could do for me you'd do it. 'Member that?"

Gaius coughed and shifted uneasily.

"Now, Elkanah," he began, "to tell you the truth, I'm a leetle mite short jest now, but——"

"Oh, I don't want your money! I ain't so broke but what I can git three meals a day yit a while. What I want is for you to do me a favor. Will you?"

"Why, sartin!" The reply was almost enthusiastic. "What is it? Heave ahead!"

"Well"—Mr. Berry glanced at the door once more—"well, the fact is, I—I—— Oh, consarn it all! I'm in a scrape, and—— The fact is, I've got engaged to be married and I didn't mean to. There!"

The man of money dropped the cheroot, and sat up in his chair.

"Engaged to be mar——" he gasped. "And didn't mean to! Well, if that don't beat all! What did you do? Pop

the question in your sleep? Haw! haw! haw!"

Mr. Berry did not share in his friend's hilarity. Instead, he was sullenly silent while his companion rocked back and forth and pounded his knee. At length he observed:

"When you git through makin' a bigger dum fool of yourself than usual, I'll tell you how it happened."

The process took some time, but at length Mr. Tubman's face narrowed perceptibly, and, after two or three violent chokings and swallowings, he answered that he was "feelin' some better" and would like to hear further particulars.

"It's Tabitha Jarvis," began Elkanah; and added, briskly: "Now, shut up! If you laff ag'in I'll go home."

"I wan't laffin'. That is, not 'special. Tabby Jarvis! That catamaran! Why——"

"I know what she is, and I don't need you to tell me, nuther. She's got a temper like a wild cat, and that's what I'm 'fraid of. You see, I ain't never married, but I always was a great feller for the girls to take to. I don't know why they do it. 'Tain't 'cause I'm good-lookin'."

"No; that's sartin."

"Well, I ain't no image, like some folks," was the rather indignant rejoinder. "But never mind. I've been in the habit of runnin' down to Tabby's every once in a while jest for sociability, so's to speak. I used to know Jerry, when he was alive, so 'tain't no more'n nat'ral that I should take a sort of int'rest in his widder, is it?"

"No, sartinly not."

"Yes. Well, I've been goin' down there, and once in a while I'd stay to supper. Tabby's a rippin' good cook, and the way she can make a cranb'ry pie—— Whew! Last night I was there, and when we got through supper I helped her wash dishes. 'Twan't no more'n any man would have done. We was washin'—that is, she was washin' and I was wipin'—and I says, like a fool: 'Seems kind of like married folks to be doin' housework this way.' And says she: 'That's so.' And I says somethin' else, and she says somethin' else, and, fust thing I knew, she drops the dishcloth and grabs me 'round the neck, and says: 'Yes, Elkanah; if you want me, I'm yourn.' And I swear I never asked her, nuther!"

"Why didn't you tell her she was mistook?" inquired Mr. Tubman.

"Tell her! Tell *her!* Say! I was so upsot I couldn't say nuthin', and when I got my senses, so to speak, I was too scart. And I've been scart all day. She's jest the kind to sue a feller for breach of promise, and as for marryin' her—well, I'll jump off the dock fust. I dunno but I will, anyway." The last in a desperate groan.

"Now, hold on, Elkanah! Hold on! Don't talk that way. Ain't there nothin' you can do?"

"Well, there ain't but one thing I can think of, and you'll have to help me do that. See here, Ga'us! You've got to cut me out."

*"Cut you out!"*

"Yup. Everybody in town knows you've got money. Some of 'em says it's ten thousand and some seven; but they all say it's a lot more'n it is. There ain't a old maid nor widder sca'cely 'round that you couldn't have if you asked 'em, 'spite of your lameness. Tabby'd heave me over in a minute for you, and you've got to make her do it."

"Make her do it? *I* have! And I've got to marry that critter while you set and laff at me! You must think I'm a——"

"I didn't say marry; I said act as if you wanted to. Go and commence callin' on her. Pretty soon I'll git jealous, understand? Then I'll say she's got to choose between us. She'll choose, all right—you bet on that. She ain't goin' to take any poor snipe like me when she thinks she can have a rich chap like you. So she'll give me my walkin' papers, and there won't be no trouble nor suit nor nothin'. Then *you'll* quit callin' and everything'll be all right."

"Well, I won't do it."

"All right! Here goes for the dock! I can see how much your gratefulness amounts to. When I'm drownded you'll have me on your conscience. Good-by."

Mr. Berry made a desperate lunge for the door, but his friend dragged him back. Then followed a long and hotly contested argument, the victim of woman's wiles making frequent dashes for the "dock," and the frightened Gaius pushing him into his chair by main force. It ended by Mr. Tubman's agreeing to call once or twice upon Mrs. Jarvis, just to please his friend.

"But there ain't goin' to be no spoonin' nor marryin' bus'ness," he vowed.

"Of course not," said Mr. Berry, gleefully. "It's all make b'lieve. Ga'us, you're a true-blue shipmate, like I always thought you was. I shan't forgit it. Start right in ter-morrer, won't you?"

And Gaius did "start in" the next day, to the extent of limping in the direction of the Widow Jarvis' cottage and staring at it from a safe distance for about an hour. His courage carried him no nearer, however, and, in consequence, he was obliged, that evening, to listen to reproaches from Mr. Berry, coupled with dark threats concerning the "dock." He promised faithfully to call the following afternoon, and he kept his promise. Mrs. Jarvis appeared to be glad to see him, and he repeated his call two days later.

At the end of a fortnight Elkanah jubilantly reported that he believed "things was workin' all right."

"She ain't nigh so soft-soapy as she was, Ga'us," he crowed. "She don't pertend to be so turrible glad to see me, nuther. Keep the pot a-bilin'. I'll begin to git jealous pretty soon."

In pursuance of this plan, he dropped in at the Jarvis house on an afternoon when he knew his friend had preceded him, pretended to be much surprised to find the latter there, and, after sulking in gloomy silence for a few minutes, announced that he must be going. The widow offered no strenuous objections, so he went. At the meeting of the conspirators that night he was in high spirits.

"It's a-workin', Ga'us!" he chuckled. "It's a-workin'! How does she treat you? What do you talk 'bout?"

"We was talkin' 'bout my money today," replied his fellow plotter. "She's dreadful anxious to find out how much I'm wuth, but she ain't found out yit, and she ain't goin' to, if I know it. Sometimes she talks 'bout you."

"Well, that's nat'ral, I s'pose. Poor thing! She'll be dreadful sorry to lose me. Sometimes I kind of pity her."

"Humph! She don't act very sorry. When you bounced out this afternoon she laffed and said you never did have much sense. Said 'twas nice to have me call, 'cause I could talk 'bout somethin' besides codfish."

Mr. Berry seemed to resent this lack of appreciation on the part of his *fiancée*, but upon his friend's offering to resign immediately in his favor he swallowed his indignation and vowed entire satisfaction with the course of events.

"'Bout a week longer and it'll be all over," he declared. "Work the money dodge all you can, Ga'us."

The climax came one evening at the week's end, just as Elkanah had predicted. Mr. Tubman was seated in the parlor holding a skein of yarn for Mrs. Jarvis in the most approved loverlike fashion, when the door burst open and Mr. Berry appeared. His hair was arranged—or disarranged—with the proper eye for effect, his frown was magnificent, and his voice trembled with emotion as he delivered his ultimatum.

"Tabby Jarvis," he shouted, "I've stood this as long's I can."

"Why, Elkanah!" exclaimed the widow; "what do you mean?"

"Mean?" roared the injured man. "Mean? I mean that—that hoppergrass there!"

This reference to Mr. Tubman's lameness startled that gentleman out of his studied calm, and he hotly demanded to know who Mr. Berry was calling a "hoppergrass." But Mrs. Jarvis, with icy coolness, cut short any reply to this question.

"Elkanah Berry," she said, "ain't you ashamed of yourself, comin' to my house in this condition?"

This not being the answer that Mr. Berry expected, he was somewhat taken aback, and, after glancing over his person in a bewildered sort of way, stammeringly asked: "What condition?"

"I've been told there was folks sellin' it in this town," continued the widow; "but I didn't think you was one of their customers. You go home, and go to bed, and look out you ain't took up on the way. The idea! And you leadin' in temp'rance meetin' not more'n ten days ago!"

"Never you mind my condition!" shouted Elkanah. "The question is, which is it to be—me or him? If you'd rather have a—a step-and-go-fetch-it instead of me, why, have him; but you've got to make your ch'ice right now."

"Mr. Tubman," said Mrs. Jarvis, turning to Gaius, "if you'll jest step out and git the sheriff, please."

"Make your ch'ice!" howled Mr. Berry. "Make your ch'ice. One of us has got to go—me or him. Shall *I* go? Shall I?"

"I guess you'd better, if you think you can git home alone."

"Good-by, Tabby," said Mr. Berry, with feeling. "I'd have been a good husband to you, but you've chose another man. Good-by!"

"Good-by. I hope you'll feel better in the mornin'."

The jilted swain, groaning deeply, staggered from the room and through the yard to the gate. His groans continued until he was out of sight and hearing of the house. Then he brightened up, danced a sort of highland fling in the middle of the road, and hurried off to his own home, singing merrily as he went.

An hour or so later, as he sat on his porch, smoking with the air of one whose troubles are ended, he heard a hurried "click-click" upon the walk, and, leaning forward, saw an agitated shape approaching through the darkness.

"Hello, Ga'us!" he hailed. "Is that you?"

Mr. Tubman made no immediate answer. Instead, he threw himself down upon the front steps and panted audibly. Elkanah's exuberance bubbled over.

"Well, we done it!" he chuckled, slapping his leg. "We done it to the cap'n's taste. Didn't I do the jealous bus'ness fine? Didn't I, hey?"

And then Mr. Tubman awoke.

"Yes, you done it!" he sputtered. "Oh, Lord, yes, you done it elegant! You done it *too* fine! And you done me, too! Oh, my land of love!"

"Why, what's the matter, Ga'us? She hove me over, all right, didn't she?"

"Yes, she hove *you* over; but how 'bout *me?* I knew how 'twould be. You told her to take her ch'ice. Well, she took it. I'm it!"

Mr. Berry turned pale. "What!" he gasped; "you don't mean——"

"I mean that I'm engaged to be married to Tabby Jarvis; that's what I mean. And if you don't git me out of this scrape somehow, after gittin' me into it, *I'll* jump off the dock, but I'll shove you off fust! You—you everlastin'——"

By degrees, and with many parentheses in which he called his fellow conspirator everything but a wise man and a good fellow, Mr. Tubman told his tale—how, after Elkanah's dramatic exit, the widow had "bust out a-cryin'," and said she had done her duty in sending her former swain about his business.

"'And, oh! Ga'us,' says she, 'I had to choose between you—he told me to—and I done it,' she says. 'And, oh! Ga'us,' says she, 'you'll be a good husband to me, won't you?' And when I think," concluded the frantic Mr. Tubman, "that I got into this mess all along of helpin' you, Elkanah Berry——"

He wrung his hands by way of an ending to the sentence, and collapsed once more on the steps.

"Never you mind, Ga'us," said Elkanah, stoutly. "We'll git you clear yit. Let me think—jest let me think."

The thinking was a laborious process, and took time. It resulted in the sending of a letter—the joint composition of the conspirators—to the widow. In the letter Mr. Tubman explained that he had reached the conclusion that it would not be right for him, a cripple, to marry. The touching note ended as follows:

> I am old, and my leg ain't right, and you're young and handsome. I've let my feelin's carry me too far. Good-by, Tabitha. I shall always think of you, and I shan't never marry anybody else.
>
> Your broken-hearted GAIUS.

"Now," said Mr. Berry, as he affixed

the stamp, "you'd better keep out of sight for a day or two, so's she won't have a chance to see you. I tell you what! You stay here in my house till you git a letter from her, and I'll go down to the Trav'lers' Rest and tell 'em you've gone away for a leetle while. That's the ticket!"

Two days went by, and each afternoon Elkanah visited the Travelers' Rest, and each time he returned with news. The first day he reported that the widow had called at the hotel, and had done her best to find out where the missing man had gone, and when he would return. On the second afternoon he brought back the expected letter.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, waving the lavender envelope. "Here 'tis, shipmate. Why, what's the matter?"

"Matter enough!" replied Gaius, who was gazing disconsolately at a page of the Boston evening paper of two days before. "The Great Western Investment Company's busted."

"I want to know! You had some money in that, didn't you?"

"Had a share. I was goin' to sell it and put the money in the savin's bank up to Boston, 'long with the rest; but everybody said 'twas a good thing, so I hung on. There's a hundred dollars gone to glory! But never mind," he added, wildly; "that's only money—I can stand *that*. Open that letter quick's ever you can."

Elkanah tore open the lavender envelope, and, with a lengthening face, spelled out the following:

MY DEAR GAIUS: It seems to me that I ought to be the best judge of whether you are fit to marry me or not. If it's only your lame leg, I don't care for that. But if you are trying to get out of marrying me after trifling with my affections the way you done, I give you fair warning it won't work. I'm a peaceable woman, but I can't stand everything. There *is* such a thing as law. You'd better see me inside of a week, unless you want to get into trouble. Your own

TABITHA.

"I told you so!" shrieked the trifler with hearts. "I told you so. Lemme go! Let go of me!"

"Where are you goin' to?" pleaded Elkanah, his arms clasping the waist of his struggling friend.

"I'm a-goin' to jump off the dock or run away—one or t'other."

"Set down, Ga'us! Don't be foolish! Wait! *Wait!* I've got an idee."

It was some time before Mr. Tubman could be induced to listen to the "idee," but at length he did so under protest. But, as his friend went on, he gradually grew more interested; and, at the end, there was a glimmer of hope in his tone as he asked:

"Do you think it'll work? S'pose Abner'll take me in?"

"He'll have to take you in. He's been owin' me seven dollars and thirty cents for 'most a year, and he'll do anything I ask him. Don't you fret, Ga'us; I'll git you clear this time. Wa'n't it lucky I thought of it? 'Twas that Great Western Company's bustin' that made me."

The next day was a busy one for Mr. Berry. He first visited the Travelers' Rest, paid Mr. Tubman's board bill, and announced that the latter gentleman would not return for some time. Then he called upon Abner Edwards, the keeper of the East Harniss almshouse. Mr. Edwards' position was more or less of a sinecure, for there were but two "town's poor" in the village.

That evening, after dark, two figures, one of them limping and leaning on a cane and the other carrying a carpetbag, sneaked from the back door of the Berry cottage and took the "short cut" across the fields to the poorhouse. That night another letter was written and posted. It was a pathetic epistle.

MY DEAR TABITHA: I didn't tell you the real reason why I couldn't marry you. I couldn't bear to, somehow. I am a pauper in the poorhouse. My money was in the Great Western Investment Company, and that has failed, and here I be. How can I support a wife when the town has to support me? No, I must give you up. Good-by forever. Once your own

GAIUS.

P. S.—Don't tell anybody that I am in the poorhouse. I don't want 'em to know it till they have to.

"And the best of it is," said Mr. Berry, "that there ain't a lie in it. You

*did* lose money in Great Western, and you *be* in the poorhouse."

One, two, three days passed, and the voluntary pauper sat in the "settin' room" of the poorhouse, gloomily peering beneath the window shade, and waiting for the letter that should make him a free man once more. Mr. Berry called regularly, and was cheerily confident.

"She'll heave you over, all right, Ga'us," he urged. "She won't marry no pauper. I know *her*. Then, soon as she gives you up, you can go to Boston or somewheres for a spell, and we'll think up some plan for you to be rich again."

He repeated this observation just at dusk on the evening of the third day, as they were together in the "settin' room." It was raining, and the solitary "silverleaf" tree in the almshouse front yard looked like a ragged pauper, dripping wet and homeless.

"Then I wish to mercy she'd hurry up!" sputtered Mr. Tubman, whose temper was giving way under the strain. "It's tough eatin' poorhouse soup and baked beans when you've got nineteen hundred dollars in the bank."

A big umbrella bobbed at the front gate. Elkanah peeped under the window shade.

"It's *her*, Ga'us! She's comin' to see you. Good land! What'll I do?"

"Hide! Hide in that closet! Then you'll be a witness to what she says. Hurry up!"

There wasn't much room in the closet, but Mr. Berry, after a number of bumps and with many groans, doubled his lengthy self into the space beneath the lower shelf. He swung the door nearly shut, just as Mr. Edwards announced:

"Here's Mrs. Jarvis come to see you, Ga'us."

The widow entered the room with a rush. She shut the door in Mr. Edwards' face, plumped the wet umbrella in the corner, and then threw herself, literally, upon the neck of her betrothed.

"Oh, Ga'us!" she sobbed; "this is turrible!"

Mr. Tubman broke away from the embrace as soon as he could, and pantingly agreed that it was "turrible," indeed.

"You poor, dear thing!" continued the lady. "So this was the reason you wrote me that dreadful letter! You noble, self-sacrificin' man!"

Gaius hopelessly waved an arm. His air was that of a martyr.

"Tabby," he said, "I had hopes once; I thought I was rich, but now look at me. It's good of you to come and see me, but 'tain't right that I should allow it. Folks'll talk, and I don't want your name mixed up with 'town's poor.' Good-by, Tabby. I hope some day you'll marry a man that'll be worthy of you. Then p'raps sometimes you'll think of the poor old lame feller you had to give up."

"But, Ga'us, dear, I ain't goin' to give you up."

"*What!*"

"No, indeed. I've got such good news for you. The paper says the Great Western Company ain't really failed; it's only suspended, and in a year or so it'll pay back its stockholders dollar for dollar. So you won't have to stay here *very* long. And I'll wait for you, Ga'us, if it was *ten* year. And I'll come and see you every day."

She went away in about half an hour. Then Mr. Berry, pale and cramped, crawled slowly forth from his hiding place. His friend, seated in the armchair, was apparently in a state of trance.

"Ga'us," faltered Elkanah, "it's—it's too bad, but you mustn't give up. I'll——"

Mr. Tubman leaped to his feet, his lameness forgotten. He seized the chair by the back and sprang savagely toward his comforter. Elkanah darted through the door and slammed it behind him. A moment later he hurried down the walk, regardless of the rain.

Mr. Tubman put down the chair and sank into it. Slowly he looked out into the night, at the dripping, "silverleaf" and the sloppy walk. He was contemplating a hopeless future, bounded by two alternatives—an unending stay in the poorhouse or a life as the husband and slave of Mrs. Tabitha Jarvis.

# "THE WOMAN WITH THE BOOK"

By Richard Inson

"SO, you see," said Mrs. Vaughan, twisting the loose end of her veil into place, "there isn't any time to waste, and I've come to you because you're a beginner, and beginners are all anxious to get along in their professions—especially lawyers."

"But, my dear lady," I made answer, "you don't need an attorney to help you. You need a detective."

"That's what Jerry said at first," remarked Mrs. Vaughan, nodding her head pleasantly. "I caught him for a moment this morning between the kennels and the stable. He doesn't see the use of bothering about a hundred thousand more as long as there's enough to feed the thoroughbreds and the beagles. 'While we've got our health and a few horses, what's the use of worrying about things that ought to have come to you but didn't?' That's what Jerry said."

"That is real philosophy," I ventured.

"That is real indolence," returned Mrs. Vaughan, regarding me keenly. "I'd like to know if any woman with spirit—and you've seen me follow Jerry to hounds—wouldn't be vicious if an aged cat of an aunt were hiding a will that concerned her. Aunt Sarah always hated me. I suppose I *was* a rather disagreeable tomboy sort. But after I married Jerry I made it a point to pay a dutiful monthly call at Uncle Jared's. She used to come down to seven o'clock dinner in a ghastly black velvet frock, with a diamond necklace. Think of it! almost sixty and wearing *décolleté* and diamonds!"

"I've heard of the Crosslands dinners," I said.

Mrs. Vaughan was not to be denied. "Uncle Jared was ill for a year, scarcely ever out of bed. And yet Aunt Sarah dressed for dinner night after night, and ate it along with that pair of noiseless mummy servants, Timpson and his wife, looking on. The evening Uncle Jared died—Jerry and I drove over from Good Ground—we found her at table, black velvet and all. It was the same the day of the funeral, and I suppose she's getting into that black velvet now. It's horribly, indecently awful. I waited for a month for the sake of my self-respect. Then I drove over to see her in Jerry's new breaking cart. Aunt Sarah gave me tea in a moldy old mahogany corner. She talked about the weather, not a word about Uncle Jared—oh, she must have led him a dreadful life! Finally I blurted out something about the will. 'Your uncle left no will,' she said, and I nearly choked over my muffin. Aunt Sarah doesn't smile often, but she smiled when she saw she had startled me. My! how that woman must have always hated me!"

Mrs. Vaughan turned to me suddenly. "You've heard of the Crosslands Da Vinci?" she asked.

"I've heard a great deal about it," I answered. And I had.

Mrs. Vaughan's Uncle Jared had been roundly criticised for keeping such a priceless work of art unguarded in a non-fireproof country house. The Metropolitan Museum had made him several offers for the picture. Twice attempts had been made to steal it, one of them a few months after the finding of the long-lost Gainsborough portrait. No one knew where he had bought the canvas. A government investigation failed

to reveal the despoiling of any Florentine gallery or palace, and the Italian press had vainly lamented the loss of an oil that Vasari had omitted to enumerate, but which experts united in pronouncing genuine. Only Jared Crosslands knew the secret and he never told. He died looking at the painting, which had been hung in his huge tower room where the first and last rays of the sun could warm the dimmed glories of "The Woman with the Book," the name by which the canvas was known among the critics.

"Aunt Sarah is going to lend the picture to the Metropolitan Museum," said Mrs. Vaughan. "Timpson had it half boxed when I saw it day before yesterday, and the house is to be closed next week. I never had a good look at it before. It has a fine pair of eyes, but the mouth is too thin-lipped, and no woman could take a fence and a water jump with a pair of uneven shoulders like that. You can't see the hands—the book hides one of them, and the other's half rubbed out; but if you could they'd almost surely be weak ones. It's horsy, but I do love strong hands in a woman. I suppose she was the same one he painted in his Mona Lisa. Anyway, it was the picture that made me come to you."

"The picture?" I said, puzzled.

"I mean the packing up," corrected Mrs. Vaughan. "If there was a will it's in that house somewhere. I want some one to go hunt for it—some one Aunt Sarah doesn't know. You see we, Jerry and I, can't insist upon a formal search. The thing would make such a fuss and get in the papers, and we couldn't stand that. I can't do it, for she would never leave me by myself long enough. But if a stranger could have five or ten minutes along with Uncle Jared's old-fashioned desk in the library——"

"You mean sneaking it?" I interjected.

Mrs. Vaughan flushed. "It isn't exactly that," she responded. "If there is a will we ought to know, oughtn't we? And you can't bribe Timpson or his wife. I tried that. It does sound queer, but you see if the thing isn't hunted for now, the house will be dismantled and there won't be another chance. Remember, I don't say Aunt Sarah is hiding the paper. She may never have found it. But I do believe she is glad that I'm disappointed. Of course I couldn't have gone to a strange lawyer about all this, for he'd have been sure to misunderstand. But you are a friend as well. I've always trusted you ever since you looked after that wretched Torrance girl everyone cut at the Trevano house party. I've thought it all out. If you could only get thrown from your horse in front of the driveway gate or something. They'd *have* to take you in if you made believe you had sprained your ankle."

"That would be rather difficult," I objected.

My client's enthusiasm did not desert her. "An automobile might be better," she suggested. Then her face grew bright with sudden inspiration.

"Boy," she said, leaning forward eagerly, "it's just come to me. You'll need a woman to help you."

"With the automobile?"

"With the automobile," she said, after me.

"But you told me there wasn't any use in your going down again," I said. "And, anyway, I don't believe Jerry would——"

"Oh, bother," burst out Mrs. Vaughan. "I don't mean that I'm going to be the woman. That's out of the question. But you must know some one you can take along—a girl you can trust, one who doesn't talk."

"They're extremely rare—that kind," I observed.

My jest did not please her. "I am really in earnest," she said.

"What do you say to the Torrance girl?" I suggested.

"She'd go with you fast enough," snapped my client. "The way she threw herself at your head was simply shocking."

"That was simply gratitude," I temporized. "The rest of them cut her, you said so yourself."

"Thank goodness, she's in Europe,"

remarked Mrs. Vaughan. "Dick, don't let's waste time in silly prattle. The thing is serious to me, and there isn't any time to lose. It ought to be done right away."

"The automobile is easy enough," I said, pushing the button in my desk. "I'll borrow Bobbie Reynolds' car by telephone."

The click-clack of typewriter keys in the room beyond ceased, and the swinging door opened. Miss Bond, my stenographer, stood inquiringly on the threshold, a few loose sheets of letter paper in her hand.

"Please get me 2736 Cortlandt," I said. I should have said something more, but Mrs. Vaughan started from her chair. "Why—it's you," she said, in surprise. "Everyone's been wondering—there must be some mistake."

The girl in the doorway bowed gravely, but made no effort to step forward. "How do you do, Mrs. Vaughan?" she responded. I could see the dismayed annoyance flash into her eyes. "Is that all, Mr. Carton?" she asked.

"I think that is quite all," I answered, and the door swung shut.

"You don't mean——?" stammered Mrs. Vaughan.

"She's my typewriter," I said, a bit testily.

"She? Don't you know who she is?" persisted my client. "Why, that's 'Posey' Bond, Hurlaw Bond's daughter."

I gasped with reason. "I'm an idiot," I said, weakly. "She's been in the office for three months, and I never guessed. The name didn't mean anything to me."

Mrs. Vaughan reflected. "It was a year ago the crash came. The family slipped out of sight when Hurlaw Bond disappeared. It *was* a scandal, you know—poor people's money and all that. But who ever thought 'Posey' Bond could give up cotillons for night school!"

"She gave me a business college reference," I said. "And you must remember that all of us haven't got Uncle Jareds."

"Don't be sarcastic," said Mrs. Vaughan.

"I pay her fifteen dollars a week," I added.

My client put her hand upon my arm. She spoke quickly and earnestly. "Dick, she'll do. Take her. She'll go—if you ask her."

"She?" I echoed, lamely.

"You're such a stupid," cried Mrs. Vaughan. "It's more than serious now. Don't you see that if you find that paper there will be a way out of things for 'Posey' Bond?"

"You mean——" I began.

"That's just what I do mean," interrupted my client. "And she can't be too proud to take it, for she'll have earned it, you see. It's providence."

"I'm beginning to value my stenographer," I objected. "I should hate to lose her. And really fifteen dollars a week is good pay."

Mrs. Vaughan drew a small stopwatch from her belt. "I've promised to meet Jerry at the Thirty-fourth Street ferry," she said, "and I'm more than my usual half hour late. Will you take my case?"

I shook hands with her sincerely as I ushered her into the hall from my private room. "I've taken it already," I replied, "although you really ought to have gone to Mulberry Street."

"Don't try Timpson," whispered Mrs. Vaughan, as she stepped into the elevator. "And Timpson's wife is worse than hopeless."

"Thank you," I called out after her. "I'll 'phone you at 'The Shingles.'"

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow," said I; and she was gone.

I stood helplessly for a few moments watching the indicator mark the progress of Mrs. Vaughan's elevator to the arcade below. I had been fairly familiar with the details concerning Hurlaw Bond's cropper in steel. And I had felt sorry for his family in the space of time one consumes in scanning his daily paper. That I had been employing Hurlaw Bond's daughter as a stenographer struck me as a trifle fantastic. On the whole, I was somewhat sorry Mrs. Vaughan had come. At my desk I juggled with a bronze paper weight, think-

ing. It was, of course, altogether preposterous—the expedition to the Crosslands, and doubly so this suggestion of taking a girl as a companion. Once again the swinging door opened. "2736 doesn't answer, Mr. Carton," said Miss Bond. I think it was her unexpected entrance in the midst of my reverie that made me blurt out words which, had I deliberated upon, I should not have uttered. The dusk came early in the outer office, and the girl was limned against the glow from the green electric globes at her desk. She was very slim and very young as I glanced at her, for the first time, intentionally keenly.

"Miss Bond," I said. "I wish you would go automobile riding with me this evening." She made a slight gesture of the hand. "Don't misunderstand," I added, hastily. "It is altogether a business trip. And if you decide to assist me it will mean a great deal to us."

"To Mrs. Vaughan?" she inquired.

"And to me," I finished.

"Ah," said the girl.

"I couldn't help noticing that you know Mrs. Vaughan," I continued, very lamely.

"I knew her once," remarked Miss Bond.

"I hope you'll not misunderstand," I was floundering, and I knew she knew it.

"I've learned one must never misunderstand," replied my stenographer, "and as it is past five o'clock, if you will tell me where——"

"Oh, yes," I cut in. "There won't be anything more to-day. We can dine downtown together if it will——"

"Thank you, I always go back to the Martha Washington for dinner at six," interrupted Miss Bond, with finality. "If you will tell me where we are going?"

"Then you *are* going?" I said, relieved. The girl nodded. "I'd like to catch the seven o'clock boat for Long Island City. We can get through sooner if we make an early start. And if I may say so, there will be a moon to-night, and I'd prefer clothes that don't——"

Again my stenographer would not let me finish. "Will a tan raincoat do?" she asked.

"Tan will do," I said. Then she, too, was gone in the elevator.

The reckless absurdity of the adventure did not fail to present itself, you may be sure, as I went mechanically about completing my arrangements. Before I went uptown to my rooms I managed to get Bobbie Reynolds on the Royalton wire and borrowed his new touring car. I'd made the trial spins with him in the machine, and I knew what it could do. There was only one objection to it—it was red; but I decided to stick by speed and trust to that for blurring the color if it came to a pinch. Anyway, there were dozens of red cars on the island, and I didn't fancy picking out a strange puff-wagon in a dark *garage*. Then, too, Bobbie Reynolds' car had an ingenious attachment for locking the steering gear, which no one unacquainted with the mechanism would be liable to puzzle out in a hurry. This might prove to be immensely better than having to hide two or three feet of angular, nickeled steel in the Crosslands hedge somewhere; even this far in advance I had made up my mind that the car might anchor on the Crosslands lawn or among the Crosslands garden truck, but was *not* to be sheltered in the Crosslands carriage shed, not even if Timpson should insist. It did not take much imagination to feel that the Timpsons were not destined to be popular with me.

When I had been mustered out of Squadron A I brought my uniform togs home from the armory; and after dinner, while I waited for the man with the car, I overhauled my old cavalry revolver, slipping a fresh cartridge into each chamber. I remember feeling quite like a plotting highwayman as I put the firearm into my pocket. And ten minutes afterward, as I picked my way across the brightly lighted plaza, slowing up to crawl through the tangled lines of carriages headed for dinner and theater, I felt outlawed in the thick of normal evening existence. Truly, I should not have been surprised if the patrolman on duty at the crossing be-

tween the Savoy and the Netherlands had held up his hand and had ordered me to stop.

Miss Bond was in the women's cabin. As soon as I had blocked the car against the forward chains, I went to find her, and it was a tan raincoat that I followed out upon deck, for she rose when she saw me coming and led the way.

"There *is* going to be a moon," she said, while we leaned over the rail together. "Is that the car?"

"It belongs to a friend of mine," I replied. "He's going to break the beach records in California with it."

"Oughtn't you take off the initials and the number?" she asked.

"I had forgotten that," I said. Then I did it, altogether unobserved save for a sleepy truck driver, lolling high upon his wagon perch.

"I think I should begin to explain," I commenced, as I came back to her.

"No, please wait," she said. "I'm a bit wild to-night. It may be the funny way the lights dance on the water. I don't quite know. But please wait. Just tell me what to do before the time comes for doing it. That is all. Just tell it to me as if—as if you were dictating a letter." They were making fast at the slip now, and the cogwheels clanked noisily.

"This isn't the office, Miss Bond," said I, a bit warmly. "And I think that of the two of us I am the wilder. I think that if I did what were right I would take you straight back to the Martha Washington."

"Nonsense," she replied, with a laugh. "I want to see *you* break some road records. And I promise you that I shall have forgotten all about it by to-morrow." I don't think I can exactly explain it, but there was something in the way she spoke that made me willing—almost eager—to go on.

Soon we had left the ugly environs of Long Island City behind us, and were bowling evenly over solid macadam. For more than an hour we streaked it unceasingly. Miss Bond sat, leaning back in the tonneau, her face lightly swathed in a dust veil. The pace at which Bobbie Reynolds' machine leaped along made her raincoat by no means uncomfortable. I had tossed my straw hat at my feet, and my hair whipped about my chauffeur's goggles. Once I called something to her, but she could not have heard me, for she sat motionless and made no sign. So I turned to my steering again, and not very long afterward the taste of the sea came to us and the end of our journey was near.

The Crosslands country house is a rambling frame and stone pile at the crest of an almost steep ascent. Its verandas, encircling the entire building, command a goodly view of the Sound and the Shinnecock Hills. You have to pass it on the way to Southampton, and the stranger always pauses to inquire whose it is, the unsightly structure, with its red and green shingles, its carefully serried cobble piers, and the brand new windmill—gaunt arms flailing loosely, as if in protest at being foisted upon the landscape as an ancient thing. I knew the surrounding country well, and I turned the car from the road into a patch of hillocky meadow as soon as I felt the wheels skid over some loose planks which bridged the brook at the foot of the hill. It was to take a final word of counsel with my companion.

The night was one of those black and whites Lawson loves to talk about on Sunday evenings at the National Arts Club. Three-quarters of a moon was scarfed in streaks of wind cloud, driven from Heaven knows where. You could see a flecked mass of hill and little valley, now and then striped alternately with light and shadow, straight lines of both; until you fancied you could make out the pulsation of the Tiana Bay beacon, or the tin markers on the putting greens of the club links, or any other old thing. The Crosslands place above us seemed almost dark. Only in its rear, a few hundred yards to the south, across the stable lane, the lamps in the Hubert bungalow were burning cheerily. I had put in a week end at squash with the Huberts the fortnight before, and I thanked fate for that now. For I recalled the half-hidden circling carriageway which led to the turnpike a quarter mile below the brook. It came to me

rather solemnly that I might have use for this knowledge that night.

Then I bethought me of the girl. She was sitting staring through her dust veil. I suppose I am as plucky as most men, but the ride was over now and the actuality of what I was doing began to throttle me. There I crouched in an automobile at the foot of a hill; the murmur of the brook to the right of us, the lights from Tom Hubert's place filtering across country in raggedly distilled drops of yellow, and a girl—a girl I barely knew—at my elbow, bound with me upon an errand of which she did not yet know the import.

I started as she touched me on the arm. "Aren't we going on?" she asked.

Her words, the even calmness of them, pulled me together again, and I sent the car quivering up the hill. Lord, what a racket those French machines make of a lonely night up grade! But it was within the shelter of a clump of scrub pines that I halted the car—on Crosslands land. A blot of moonlight made the thing flash out scarlet against the opaque hedge of blackish-green that encircled us. "Wait," I said. "I'm not quite ready. There is something to say." I was fencing with myself, with her, with us both. The hideous old windmill wheels clashed and grunted between sagging puffs of shore breeze. I would have given much for the whiff of a cigarette, or to have been able to see behind that tan veil for the fraction of a second. What must the girl be thinking now, with almost two hours of lonely riding to terrify her? She might be dumb with terror, or speechless with rage, or——

"Miss Bond," I said. "This is the truth. We *are*—that is, I am, a burglar, a burglar and play-actor rolled into one." I bent over, locking the steering gear, and the touch of metal screws steadied me. "That house yonder contains a paper—a will, that is either lost or hidden. It will mean money—money that I happen to need—if I find the paper. There is an old woman, probably in bed at this moment, with two servants, a man and wife, both equally old. What I want is some one to search a desk in a moldy old library at the head of the stairs. A quarter hour will do it, if the person is left alone. Now if one of us could look after the servants, the other could——"

"I understand," said Miss Bond. "It's a trifle irregular, isn't it?"

Then she was *not* angry, not even frightened. The foolish feeling came to me that she was amused. I bent down again to unlock the steering gear.

"Please don't," she whispered, again touching me on the arm. "And if you don't mind, I should like to get down." I told her then what Mrs. Vaughan had told me, while she untwisted her veil and rolling up her raincoat, stowed it upon the cushions. And we decided together, ridiculously calmly, on our plan of campaign. I was to go to the house and ask aid for a sister taken suddenly ill. The Timpsons would be properly solicitous. There would be homemade remedies and a half hour's rest for her, preferably upstairs—near the library. Afterward would come sufficient recovery to resume our journey, appreciation for the Timpson kindnesses, and a knowledge of either our success or failure.

"Just to feel a bit more comfortable while I am gone, you'd better take this," I said, fumbling for the revolver.

"Thank you, no," said the girl, reaching for something also. "I happened to have a pocket in this walking skirt." I saw the polish of a small pistol barrel in her hand. "And, now, *au revoir*, Rudolph," she called after me, as I turned to cross the lawn toward the porch.

"Rudolph!" I echoed, coming almost back to her.

"I'm getting wild again," she said. "Somehow I feel as if we were playing at 'Prisoner of Zenda.'" After which I marched almost gayly across the grass. I held back, however, for a full moment on the top step, as one does before his tub on a crisp morning. Through the stained glass of the heavy grilled door there came a mottled flush. My boots clattered upon the painted planks, although I tiptoed to reach the bell, for which I groped in vain; but my knuckles

rasped against an iron knocker, and, lifting the hammer, I let it fall against the metal sound plate. I swore to myself out of sheer relief as the echo split on either side of me, and wavered out along the sweep of porches. Come what may, I was in for it now, and I was glad of it. After all, being afraid lasts only until a crisis is at hand. Even the recollection of the girl I had left alone with the automobile did not make me apprehensive now. I waited for Timpson's wrinkled face buoyantly, impudently, assuredly. He was long in responding. "Probably the rheumatism, and he is upstairs," I remember reflecting. And, pleased with my calmness, I rat-tat-tatted loudly again, and again. Once I thought I heard footsteps and a faint fumbling with the lock. But this was gone with the imagining, and I had stepped nearer for a third announcing of my presence without, when a chain key slid out of its groove on the other side of the oaken panel, and the half glare of a hall gas lantern showed through eight inches of opened door. Framed in the illumination stood a man. The man was not Timpson, unless he had grown young overnight.

He was a slim fellow of, say, thirty-five, with a smooth face and a pair of keen eyes. I knew about his eyes, for they were fixed upon mine; and he had me at a disadvantage, the light being behind him. His English walking coat was well cut, and he wore dogskin driving gloves.

"Well," he said, "what do you want?"

"It's unpardonably late, I know," I began. "But I'm on my way back to town in an automobile."

"Yes," he interrupted, impatiently. "I knew that. You've got your dust glasses on."

No wonder he had stared at me when the door opened. I took off my goggles and crammed them into my pocket beside the revolver.

"We haven't any gasoline, if that's what you mean," said the man in the walking coat.

"It isn't gasoline," I cut in. "It's my sister. She's been taken ill. I think a half hour's rest and a bit of brandy would pull her together enough to go on."

The door opened another inch. "Your sister! H'm! that's awkward," he mused. "You don't live down here, then?"

"No," I answered. "But I know a bit about the country, and I thought that maybe Mrs. Crosslands——"

"Ah, yes—Mrs. Crosslands, to be sure," he said.

"Or Timpson," I ventured.

The man in the doorway shrugged his shoulders. "I'll get Timpson," he said, and was gone for a second—not more. I knew the old servant must have been at his elbow all the time, for he was fairly popped out upon the veranda beside me, bent-shouldered and liveried. The man in the walking coat pointed down the steps. "Show us where your car is," he said. "It's awkward, but it can't be helped. A half hour, you said." He left the door swung wide open as he followed me over the grass. "You know Mrs. Crosslands?" he volunteered.

"I've never seen her, but I know the Crosslands place," I said.

"I never saw it until this evening," he rejoined. There was a sudden change in his manner. It was almost friendly now. "I'm her nephew. I've been abroad until a month ago. She sent for me to come down and help her pack."

"Oh, yes," I said. "The pictures."

"Yes," he repeated, "the pictures."

Timpson was tottering a few paces ahead of us in zig-zags. Once he stumbled and was down at my feet. I bent to lift him, and heard the old man's teeth chattering. "My God! My God!" he mumbled, as I set him upon his legs.

"Shut up, you fool," said the man in the walking coat, roughly. "He's afraid of the dark," he explained.

I had bitter thoughts about Mrs. Vaughan as we crossed the final bit of turf to Miss Bond and the automobile. Why hadn't she told me of possible nephews? There would be precious small chance of inspecting Uncle Jared's library pigeonholes now. If it could have been done gracefully, I should have withdrawn entirely. And the worst of

it was, the girl waiting for our coming did not know. We had taken our ride for naught.

Now we were in the shadow of the scrub pines. I made out the bulk of Bobbie Reynolds' car, and Miss Bond's voice came to us, while Timpson halted and tottered, looking for its owner. "Is that you, Rudolph?" it said. That she had the calmness to continue the jest with which we had parted made me smile in spite of me. The girl was superb. There was even the proper note of peevishness in her tone. It was splendid.

My companion pulled a little storage battery searchlight from his pocket. Its intermittent stabs of light covered the machine in sections. They lingered longest on Miss Bond, who was leaning languidly upon the cushions. "I'm so sorry to have been a bother, Mr.——" She paused expectantly.

"Mr. Arden," said Mrs. Crosslands' nephew. And it was upon Mr. Arden's arm that she leaned confidingly during the walk back to the house, I following, and Timpson, still mumbling and tottering a bit, behind me. "Moldy old mahogany," Mrs. Vaughan had called the Crosslands' interior, and she had not been inaccurate. There was an immense fireplace under the staircase, and a raftered living room to the left of that. Half a dozen candles in wall sconces were guttering in the summer draughts. Their yellow flicker mixed unpleasantly with the wrought-iron door lantern's gas flame. Packing boxes and excelsior littered the floor. Everything betokened vigorous preparations for leaving. The house had already been almost dismantled, and I realized that Mrs. Vaughan had come to me too late. It was all a mistake—a dreary tangle of wasted time and effort. I felt sick at heart to think of our ride back to town defeated, as I looked at Miss Bond, gracefully at ease on a faded old Davenport, with Mr. Arden bending over her, and Timpson hovering at his elbow. There was not a gleam from upstairs; but across the hall, to the right of the door, from behind heavy velours portières, came a companion flicker to the candles in the sconces. From what Mrs. Vaughan had said, I knew this must be the breakfast room.

"I'm quite better, thank you, Mr. Arden," I heard Miss Bond say. "No, I don't wish any brandy. But if I could have a glass of ice water and a cracker——"

"Timpson, some ice water," said Arden. The old servant stared at him stolidly.

"Ice water, you fool," repeated Arden. "Bah! I'll get it myself," he snapped, as Timpson crawled between the portières. "In a moment," he said to the girl, and, pulling off his gloves as he went, he disappeared after the servant.

What a change when we were alone again! Miss Bond leaped softly from the Davenport and faced me with shining eyes. "We didn't expect him," she whispered. "But there's just a chance. Try the upstairs now. I'll keep him interested. I'll—I'll flirt with him in the butler's pantry if necessary. Quick!"

Her enthusiasm was infectious. For the moment she roused me from my hopelessness, and I started for the staircase.

"Oh, Mr. Arden," I heard her call, fluttering over to the curtains. "I'm coming to help you get it." My foot was on the first landing. Arden's voice was raised as if in protest, and then the girl vanished.

What was it that made my heart miss a beat and then pound savagely? What was it that sent me tumbling down the slippery, polished steps toward the breakfast room? It was a shrill, an agonized repetition of Timpson's "My God! My God!" that I had overheard upon the lawn—that, and one, just one, sharp cry of alarm from Miss Bond. The brass rings rattled on the rod as I flung the velours aside.

"If you *would* come, sit down and join the rest of the supper party," I heard Arden saying. And, seeing the pistol in his hand, the barrel level with my eyes, I dropped into the chair he shoved toward me with his foot. I know now how Bluebeard's wife felt when she was introduced to the assortment of heads in the cabinet. Her pulse didn't

quicken perceptibly, but her eyes must have strained with the looking until she could feel them fairly bulging out over the lids. That is what mine did.

There was an oval mahogany dining table, with no cloth, and two quaint silver candelabra sending shaky ripples of yellow across the wood. The dishes and untouched food were in order as if for a late supper, and a copper coffeepot was hissing over its alcohol.

Let no one imagine I sat there taking a careful inventory of these things, with Arden's revolver at my head. I was simply developing mental photograph films at a rapid rate, and altogether despite me. Over across from me clung Timpson, his cheeks livid and nails dug against the top of a highboy to keep him from falling. And, one hand still grasping the curtain she had parted a moment before, stood Miss Bond, quite turned into stone, and not seeing me nor Arden, but a thing beyond the sputtering coffeepot. And, as I looked at her, the white of shock was swept from her face by a rush of crimson. It was her poise returning.

Then I, too, rolled my eyeballs past Arden's pistol barrel, and had my first introduction to Mrs. Vaughan's Aunt Sarah. Perhaps I needed the black velvet, the *décolleté* and the diamonds to identify her, for the object I gazed at was scarcely human. It sat at the head of the table, a napkin tied across mouth; the cords of an age-warped neck pitifully knotted and fluttering; its stare that of a madhouse inmate. The hands had not been secured, and these twisted and untwisted, the fingers sparkling with rings. On another chair lay, rather than sat, a woman equally old, in the garb of a servant. There was no need to wonder if this might not be Timpson's wife. Her lips were moving in one continuously horrible moan, and in the hush of those first few moments I could make out the broken bits of prayer. I felt the tableau soak into my brain until I could bear it no longer. And I would have turned to Arden with an infuriated demand to know what meant the outrage, when my wrenched seeing laid hold of another vision. By the clinging Timpson at the highboy, its frame resting upon the arms of a heavy chair, stood "The Woman With the Book." I'll warrant she never gazed at a stranger sight in all her travels since Venice and Mona Lisa. And very quickly—I loathed myself for having been such a doubly blind mole—I interpreted Mr. Arden, with his dogskin gloves and pistol. Below the frame, on the leather seat, lay a keen knife, such as cobblers use. And the Crosslands Da Vinci sagged in a loosened fold at the right-hand corner. The canvas was one-quarter slit out of its dingy gilt inclosure.

"Put your hands on the table," said the man in the walking coat. "The lady may sit beside our hostess." He smiled slightly as he nodded toward Mrs. Crosslands. Miss Bond swept past him to the chair. Her face was working as she seized the trembling hands with the rings, imprisoning them in her own firm clasp. Then she glanced from the knotted napkin toward our master. "She's half choking," she cried. It was an appeal. The other met it irresolutely.

"I'd just started when you two came a-meddling," he growled. "I'd have been gone in another half hour, and the cringing dolt could have freed her. She and the other were squealing like a cellar full of rats. Let her alone for another ten minutes. You and your brother can tidy things up then."

"Look here, Arden!" I broke out.

"Arden will do," said the man. "No," and the revolver swayed quickly below my left shoulder blade, "your hands on the table—so. Now, Timpson, you with the St. Vitus dance, go through his pockets." My eyes signaled a negative to the girl, while the palsied corpse in livery lurched to my chair and searched me as a hypnotic subject might have done. The man with the pistol grinned as the servant produced my revolver. "Shake 'em out," he ordered; and, with clumsy fingers, Timpson opened the cylinder, dropping the cartridges upon the floor. There was a struggle going on between our master's natural manner and the tones and actions he was trying to assume. For a few

minutes he was the gentleman, and then again he was the ruffian. I think the former guise sat upon him the more naturally. "Put it back in his pocket," he bade Timpson, and I felt the emptied firearm once more in my possession beside my dust goggles.

"You scoundrel!" I shouted. And I was conscious that the English language was but a poor thing.

"That will do, my friend," he said. "I don't want to make Timpson gag *you*. I'm sorrier than you are for this. And I'm going right away—in your automobile. The livery beast I drove here will scarcely be speedy enough now." Miss Bond's right hand was playing with the base of the nearest candelabrum. She frowned as Timpson's wife's moaning would not cease. And again, without moving, my gaze signaled delay.

"Let's be fair to each other," said the stranger. "Give me an hour's start, and I won't truss you up before I leave. Will you?"

"No," I snarled. "No, damn you!"

He grinned again. My anger evidently pleased him. "Easy—ladies present," he said. "Will *you?*" he turned to Miss Bond.

"But you mustn't take our automobile, Mr. Arden," the girl answered. "It isn't ours. It's borrowed."

"I like sand in a woman," he said, admiringly. "By Jove! you'll finish my work for me. Timpson here is too shaky."

Miss Bond shrank from the picture propped upon the chair. "That," she whispered. "Why, that's 'The Woman With the Book'! Why, that is sacrilege."

"That's what I've come for," said Arden. "That means a king's ransom on the other side. Cut it out, and be careful of the edges."

I stood up with a sudden impulse, for the girl was faltering. "Let me do it," I asked. With Arden's pistol at my back, and Miss Bond's breath coming and going in audible intervals, I ripped the priceless old canvas along its frame until I lifted it, a limp roll, upon the table. If I ever commit a murder, I do not expect to feel more criminal than at that moment, with the eyes of "The Woman With the Book" staring at me in the candle gleam. Timpson shivered until the highboy rattled its freight of dishes.

"What a vandal you are!" said Arden. But he licked a dry mouth, and I felt that the madness of the crime was in his bones as well as my own. "Roll it up—a tablecloth out of one of the drawers will do," he commanded. I found a cloth, and, as I gently wrapped the Da Vinci in the soft folds, smoothing the linen to keep from cracking the brittle paint, a handful of pressed wild flowers and a folded paper, with one or two yellow letters, fell from the doubled backing of tissue cloth. "Put them in," said Arden. "That's her pedigree."

My work done, I leaned weakly against the table. I had almost forgotten that Miss Bond was in the room. It was Timpson who jerked us all back into realization. With a screech, the death's head at the highboy sprang past us, pushing through the door into the serving closet. And while we stared there came to us the rattle of a telephone-box lever shaken up and down, with the jingle of its bell. "Help!" Timpson was yelling into the transmitter. "Murder! Tell Mr. Hubert! The master's picture! Help!" He kept yelling it over and again, rattling at the lever.

The knife was still in my grasp. If we could stand our ground until help came—— So I leaped for the serving-closet door also. In the doing I brushed against Timpson's wife, and she rolled to the floor, still moaning out her disjointed prayers. My back was against the panel, as I faced Arden.

He came toward me with only the beast in his face now. "Stand aside, you maniac!" he shouted. "There's a party line, and that devil will have the neighbors about our ears. I don't want to murder, but, by Heaven——" His finger was tightening on the trigger, and yet the thing which concerned me most—it was the aphasia that always comes to a vigorous man before approaching sudden death, I suppose—was the way Mrs. Crosslands' gold and tortoise shell

combs were thrust in her gray hair. There was a feeble crack from a firearm; the man's revolver arm dropped, and his weapon thumped the floor beside Timpson's prostrate wife. Upon his face was a puzzled expression. He looked at his arm, at me, and then over to where Miss Bond was standing, a thin curl of smoke above her head. Timpson's screeching in the serving closet was incessant.

The girl nodded at him almost deprecatingly. "I had to do it," she explained. "You made me. Why wouldn't you be reasonable?"

"You!" muttered Arden. "You! I knew you had sand." Wounded as he was, and probably suffering, his presence of mind returned more quickly than mine. For while I stood, holding the knife, he seized the picture in the rolled-up tablecloth with his good arm and darted into the hall. Miss Bond watched him go.

"Shoot him!" I called to her. But she would not; and when I had roughly snatched the pistol from her, the door was wide open and he was gone, across the lawn. I fired once wildly into the darkness. "I couldn't do it," I heard Miss Bond saying. "I did it once—and once was enough." She was sobbing. I turned for another look into the breakfast room. Mrs. Crosslands' eyes were still glazed above the twisted napkin. The butler's cries were like wails from the nethermost pit. We should both have gone mad, had we stayed longer. I dragged the girl out, down the steps and across the grass. Already there were shouts from the Huberts' bungalow, and a flaring of quickly-moving lanterns. And what was there for us to say in a strange house, with a gagged mistress and an empty picture frame?

So we ran, panting, tripping. I bethought me of the scarce-used driveway. And then, fagged as I was, and frantic with apprehension, I tried to smile with my parched mouth. By the scrub pines, bending over the steering gear of Bobbie Reynolds' motor car, was our friend of the walking coat. I tossed the girl in.

"Here," I said. "Take this, and use it if you need to." It was her small revolver, and she grasped it still sobbing, but without a word of protest. So I knew that Miss Bond in tears would be quite as dangerous to a thief as Miss Bond with all her normal poise her own. Afterward I thrust Arden into the seat beside me. He made no effort to resist, but stifled a groan as I touched his injured arm.

"Listen to them," he said. The shouts were nearing us, and so were the bobbing lanterns. "The cursed swarm of fireflies will be on us in another five minutes."

I leaned down, and, with a turn, unlocked the steering clutch. "You ought to read up on the new gears," I said, as we shot from the shelter of the pines, and I found the driveway.

Only once did they sight us, at the turn into the main road. It must have been Tom Hubert himself on one of his hunters who galloped up as we swung out upon the macadam, with an order to stop. "It's a red one," he yelled back to the others.

Then we had left the noise of hoofs far behind us. Three miles we covered, and a stop watch might have made interesting figures for Bobbie Reynolds. It is a pity that he may never know what probably was his car's best burst of speed. I slowed down a stone's throw from the last inlet we should pass. Two was company, and there were three of us—one of us a thief. It was time for Arden's adieu.

He divined the cause of our stopping, and scorned my help as he clambered out upon the roadway. He had no hat, and, although his right arm hung limp, he looked very likeable and gentlemanly as he faced us in the moonlight.

"A half mile across country will bring you to a railroad station," I said. "And if you need money——"

"Thank you," he replied. "I can get along."

"I want you to know how sorry I am, Mr.—Arden," said Miss Bond, leaning from her seat. It was an odd contrast—the pity in her words and the pistol in her hand.

"Let us leave it 'Arden,'" said the

man. "And you need not bother about the arm. It's only a scratch, but it numbed the muscles and made me lose my grip. Good-night, and a pleasant journey back." He stepped off a few paces.

"Poor fellow!" whispered the girl. "Somehow he seems almost nice, and a little while ago he was going to shoot you."

He wheeled at the moment and waved his good hand. "Go easy when you unroll the tablecloth," he called. "And if you get it out of the country, a personal in the London *Times* will bring you the best terms. A personal, remember, for 'Arden.' There's a palace in Italy with a place ready for that Da Vinci."

"You don't think——" I began.

Once more he waved his hand. "Oh, what's the use," he answered. "You turned the trick well, and I'm not trying to cut in. You fooled me at first, though. They'll watch all the liners. A sailing vessel's the safest." Then he was off across the moor. We did not go on until he was a mere blurred image in the moon shadows.

There is a snug box of a roadhouse five miles from Long Island City, a bit off the highway, with a cozy parlor which the first comer may have to himself, and where the landlord knows how to have a chop broiled discreetly. By my watch it was five minutes after ten as I guided the car up to the wagon shed lamps.

"We need something to pull us together," I told Miss Bond. "There's the ferry to cross, and Lord knows how many policemen to pass before we get home. And somehow I feel afraid of the police just now."

"So do I," she agreed. "And please don't forget to put back the number and the initials on the automobile." It was she who carried the rolled-up tablecloth within, cradled in her raincoat.

"Bring supper in a half hour," I said to the waiter.

"A half hour," he repeated, with preciseness; and as he went out he shut the door behind him. The girl stood swaying, the raincoat in her arms. Bit by bit, as one wipes figures off a slate, bravery vanished from her eyes and mouth. The slimness, which had until now served but to accentuate her self-reliance, was transformed into a phase of pathetic weakness. As I went to her, both hands outstretched, she swayed and fell upon an old-fashioned horse-hair sofa by the windows. I think I trod upon the picture to bend over her.

And then Richard Carton, considerably past twenty-five, was upon his knees with one very cold and trembling hand belonging to his stenographer in his grasp. "You are the bravest woman I ever knew," I told her. "Don't you see I can never forget that as long as I live?"

"It was wicked. We should never have come," she sobbed.

"It was base of me to let you run the risk," I said. My lips seemed of themselves to press the fingers I was holding. And with the touch there came a sudden joy that she did not draw them away at once, but freed them gently, struggling up into sitting, and dabbing her face with a handkerchief grimy from contact with the pistol she had carried.

"I'm very silly," she said. "I thought I had just learned not to show my feelings, and I haven't."

The scrap of a sentence meant worlds to me in that road-house parlor, with an odorous kerosene lamp shedding uncertain rays over coarse linen and thick crockery, and a ragged row of faded sporting prints splotching the fly-speckled wall. Stenography *wasn't* the country club and cotillons, not even if one were ever so plucky; and this girl had found that out.

For the while it was as if I were listening to another man talking. And yet I knew this other man was I, and I approved of every word he uttered. "If you were not you—the you I know, and to-night seems to have done what only years do sometimes—it would be an insult," I said, earnestly. "But I've the right to say it after to-night."

"After to-night." Miss Bond repeated the words. "After to-night—that means to-morrow."

"To-morrow," I began.

"But this is to-night," said the girl.

"Before they bring supper let us look at 'The Woman With the Book.'" It was she who lifted away the enshrouding linen, but it was I who picked up the handful of papers that fell to the floor. "Her pedigree," Arden had said.

Two or three were letters—a girl's letters—written very long ago. How little Mrs. Vaughan had guessed that her Uncle Jared and Aunt Sarah once had a real romance! Another paper, folded, I read and re-read. I looked at Miss Bond gravely.

"The picture goes to the Metropolitan Museum, an unqualified gift," I said. "Mrs. Vaughan was right about her legacy. It is in Transcontinental Limited four per cents. And 'Arden' was wrong about the pedigree. There isn't any."

The folded paper was the missing will. And I knew that no one save the old man had been aware of its lodging behind the painting. Very silently—we were both, I fancy, too busily thinking for talk—we rolled up the canvas again.

By this time supper was ready. At coffee we heard something which made our stares meet halfway, apprehension in both—the racket of a racing motor car suddenly halted outside. Then came the clumping of boots in the front barroom, and the tones of the landlord expostulating. The girl walked to the sofa and threw the raincoat over the rolled-up picture. Coming back, she put her elbows upon the table and regarded me half questioningly.

My pulses tingled as I pulled out my cigarette case to see if I could hold a match without a tremor. "It was criminal to ask you to stop here," I whispered. "I never thought Tom Hubert would follow."

The girl shook her head. "I'm not afraid of *that* being found out," she said. "The fates are with us to-night. But, you see, I used to know them before—before things happened."

Our landlord was agitatedly deprecatory as he rapped upon the door and informed me that a gentleman in an automobile—in fact, several gentlemen—desired to speak with me. It was annoying, to be sure, but they were quite certain I was the party they sought, because I had come in a red touring car—as if red touring cars were not plenty in his tavern sheds. Would I forgive him if he ushered them in for a moment, merely for the sake of ending the annoyance?

I would, and he did.

Tom Hubert entered first. His hunter must have thrown him after the shave with our car, for his clothing was dusty, and his coat at the shoulder was torn. Rawlins Richardson and Horace Trevano stood behind him in the doorway. For the life of me, I could not say which of the trio was taken aback the most as I advanced to meet them.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," I said, seizing Hubert's limp hand. "Why didn't you send in your card, Tom?"

"The dolt never said there was a woman," he muttered, looking over my shoulder. Richardson and Trevano shifted uncomfortably upon the threshold.

"We're a pack of fools, Carton," said Trevano. "There's been the devil to pay up at the Crosslands place. Old lady gagged, servants tied, and the prize picture gone."

"And we're supposed to be thief chasing," laughed Richardson. "The gang got away in an automobile—a red one."

"A red one," I repeated.

"I tried to tell you, gentlemen——" broke in the tavern keeper.

"You'll accept our apologies for an awkward mistake, won't you, Carton?" asked Trevano.

"Dick," whispered Tom Hubert, gripping my arm, "I'm a meddling ass, and deserve a kicking; but for God's sake tell me—isn't that girl 'Posey' Bond?"

The landlord, vibrating about us, understood very quickly. Yes, there might be champagne in the house, which could be brought quickly. Miss Bond had arisen as I led the three toward her.

I believe there were tears in Tom Hubert's eyes as he took her hand. "My dear little girl," he said, "we've all wondered where you were. You've thrown us all over, and it hurt Marian a great deal." My stenographer smiled back at

them pluckily. The way the landlord jumped as the magnum's cork flew let us all laugh, for which none of us was ungrateful.

"I didn't mean anyone should know just yet," I said, as the glasses were filled. "But, if you will, I wish you would drink to the happiness of the future Mrs. Carton." I did not glance at the girl as they drank, nor during the laughing congratulations that followed.

"Come back with us to the bungalow, Dick," begged Tom Hubert. "Marian will never forgive me if I let you both get away."

"I've promised to have Miss Bond home by twelve," I said, going with them to the porch, and waving them good-by as they rattled off.

She was sitting at table, watching the bubbles in her untouched glass of champagne. She did not look up as I entered, and there was nothing for me to say, Heaven knows; so I waited.

It may have been five minutes, it may have been ten, before she spoke, still playing with the wineglass. "Did you mean what you told those men?"

"I meant it from my heart," I answered. "Are you angry?"

"No; I am not angry," she said. Then she asked: "Did what Mrs. Vaughan told you make any difference? Would you have said it if you had not known that I knew those men—that their seeing me here at this time, without your saying what you did say, would let them think——"

"I should have said it anyway," I said.

She looked up from the glass, her eyes meeting mine fairly. "Would you say it if you knew that I was only what I was to you yesterday—your typewriter; if you did not know that I had been accustomed to your sort of people; if you simply believed me to be a brave woman whom you could love and trust?"

"I should say it," I repeated.

Her shoulders contracted in a little sigh. "Let us go," she said, wearily.

The clock in the ferry house was at twelve when the wheels of Bobbie Reynolds' car crossed the gang plank. We slid over the asphalt in silence. "The Woman With the Book" lay upon the seat as I handed her to the curb at the Martha Washington.

On the deserted steps I turned. "Posey," I said, "if there is any other test——"

She put her hand upon my arm. "It is a foolish pet name," she whispered. "But you may use it." Then the long corridor swallowed her up.

A sauntering policeman upon his beat and trying doors, came by on the other side as I climbed into the car. He stared over at me, and I smiled back. "God bless you, officer!" I called. "God bless you, old fellow, and good luck!" He was still standing open-mouthed as I made the turn at the corner. No doubt he imagined me drunk, and was considering running me in to prevent my going amuck with the automobile. I *was* drunk with my happiness.

. . . . . .

I had a telegram from Mrs. Vaughan at breakfast. It said: "Boy, I'm crazy and Jerry is almost there. I'm lunching at the Holland House at one." I found her there alone.

It was not easy for her to find a beginning for speech. There were a score of bursting inquiries upon her lips. "I saw Tom Hubert," she said, at length.

"Well, it's true," I answered, picking at my grape fruit. "I'm having the Da Vinci framed over. I left it at a Fifth Avenue shop on my way here."

"The Da Vinci!" stuttered Mrs. Vaughan.

"'The Woman With the Book,'" I explained.

My client sank feebly back in her chair, while I, enjoying my theatrical moment, solicitously plied her with sauterne. "Thank Heaven, I made Jerry keep the story from the police!" she murmured.

Then I went on: "The picture goes to the Metropolitan Museum—a gift. How is your Aunt Sarah?"

"She's a dear old thing," snapped Mrs. Vaughan. "They sent for me from Good Ground, and the poor creature clung to me all night, crying on my shoulder. I felt like a murderess."

"By the way," I remarked, marveling

at the inconsistency of some women, "you were right about that legacy. It's in Transcontinental four per cents." And then, the head waiter fluttering around our table, with, I knew, the well-defined fear that the somewhat stout lady in blue was about to have a stroke of apoplexy, I abruptly ended my play-acting and told my client the story.

. . . . . .

If you go to the Metropolitan Museum—choose an afternoon when the sunlight is filtered by a cloud or two—you will find, in the room next to the one where the crowds always flock to see Bastien LePage's "Jeanne d'Arc," the picture—"our picture," we always call it. Those who really love the old masters stand before it reverently. But how many people guess the reason for the ragged knife mark along two of the edges, which even skillful framing could not altogether hide?

## WHEN THE KING COMES TO HIS OWN

WE who knew the true king well,
We who loved and served him long,
Cleaved to him whate'er befell—
We who when they did him wrong
Could have faced the hounds of Hell
With a cheer and snatch of song—

While recrowd about his throne
They who serve when all is fair—
Knight by knight, oft tried and known,
We shall stand close round him there,
When our king comes to his own—
Stand with humbled heads and bare,
While a great shout—one alone—
For the true king rends the air.

With that shout shall die the flame,
With that day the tale be told!
Never could it be the same,
Never could we serve for gold—
We who starved and knew no shame
In the empty days of old!

So, all out-at-elbows, grim,
Hand by hand on swords a-rust—
While his kingly eyes are dim,
And his God, he knows, is just!—
We shall sadly kneel to him—
King and cause we took on trust;
Then o'er plain and mountain rim
Ride away, all stained with dust.

ARTHUR STRINGER.

# THE RETURN OF THE ROSE

By Beatrice Hanscom

MARJORIE was curled up contentedly on Mr. Caldwell's knee, resting her head against the memorandum book in his waistcoat pocket.

The hard edge of the fat little book might not have appealed to the average person as the ideal pillow, but Marjorie had explained that she liked "the humpy feeling," and she pressed her blond topknot against the waistcoat with such energy that Mr. Caldwell felt the physical discomfort usually incident to acute indigestion.

However, Patricia Day sat opposite, and that fact would have reconciled Mr. Caldwell to a far greater physical suffering; for the damage to his sensibilities which five-year-old Marjorie was inflicting was nothing in comparison with the cardiac trouble for which her aunt was responsible.

And Patricia, to-day, had lost some of her usual will-o'-the-wisp characteristics. She was daintily subdued, and therefore doubly dangerous; there was a deceptive simplicity about her white frock calculated to make an enamored young man roseately sure of the ability of a managing editor's salary to cover the domestic expenses for two.

In his saner moments Caldwell had doubted this.

But with Patricia smiling at him with a light certainly more than friendly in her blue-violet eyes, with the dainty fluffiness of her muslin gown crushed with the white filminess of sea spray into the great porch chair opposite, with the distracting glimpses of firm, round, white arms which the absurd little apologies for sleeves were generous enough to give him—what wonder that there vanished from Caldwell's mind all those sordid considerations which take thought for that dire to-morrow known as the first of the month?

Marjorie found their conversation growing distinctly monotonous. She intuitively voiced the cry of our distinguished Persian friend, *"And now no further talk of me and thee,"* and yearned to impress on her annoyingly absorbed associates something of her own forgotten personality.

"Aunt Patty," she said, suddenly.

"Yes, dear?"

"Did you ever hear Mr. Caldwell's heart beat?"

Patricia grew surprisingly amused. and suddenly pink.

"I don't think I ever had that pleasure," she laughed, gurglingly.

Mr. Caldwell looked at her reproachfully.

"It's her own fault, then, Marjorie," he said, confidentially. "I've been willing and anxious to give her an exhibition for weeks, but she's always too busy. I'm glad some one appreciates my inner attractiveness."

"It's very thumpy," Marjorie announced. "If you came and sat on his other knee, Aunt Patty, I think you could hear nicely."

"Dear Aunt Patty," said Caldwell, persuasively, "I've tried every other way to make you hear it. Won't you try Marjorie's way?"

"Pressing as your combined invitation is," said Patricia, saucily, "considerations of propriety must come first. Those delicate attentions are entirely permissible at five, Marjorie, but not for your aged aunt."

"I'm glad it's all right for me," sighed Marjorie, comfortably. "Most things aren't unless you're grown up, you know."

"I can imagine circumstances," said Caldwell, oracularly, "where it would be not only eminently proper but desirable for a grown-up."

"But aren't the grown-up young ladies very heavy to hold?" she persisted.

"Heaven knows, sweet child," said Caldwell, fervently; "it has not been my happy lot to desire or deserve such favors hitherto, though now I feel exactly like trying the experiment." His look was persuasive.

Patricia laughed saucily.

"We have to follow the beaten path of convention," she said. "I should hate to try an innovation. It requires as much courage in a woman as it does for a man to be an explorer. I never aspired to be a Columbus."

"He discovered America," stated Marjorie, triumphantly.

"And I want to show you a new world," said Caldwell, steadily—"a new heaven and a new earth, Patricia."

"Mr. Van Ness," announced Walters, appearing in the doorway.

Caldwell grew suddenly steeped in gloom.

"Hello, everybody!" said Van Ness, genially, following on the heels of his announcement with a suspicious alacrity. He had the buoyant confidence of a man who is young, super-rich, unambitious, and well fed.

In comparison with his compact, rotund figure, his good-natured, commonplace face, his exhalation of success and ease, Caldwell felt himself suddenly lean instead of lithe, lanky instead of tall, and his slender worldy portion became a mere pittance, such as this man would spend thoughtlessly on his first caprice.

"I've seen your sister and arranged about the Country Club dinner for to-night, Miss Day," announced Van Ness, cheerfully, sitting down with the air of a man who intends to stay. "There'll be plenty of room for all the people in the two touring cars, if you'll come in the new runabout with me."

"Of course I will; but isn't the run-about a very recent acquisition?" queried Patricia, amiably. "You said last week you'd never cared to own one."

"Well, I hadn't," acknowledged Van Ness; "but this is an uncommonly nice little machine. Bought it this morning, in fact. It's like the one you were admiring that day, you know, and I thought perhaps you'd like to run it down yourself. All the cars are so confoundedly heavy. I really needed something lighter," he added, with a tinge of consciousness.

Caldwell rose to go. He turned sick with the folly of trying to compete with a man who thought nothing of buying another auto for the sake of a *tête-à-tête* spin.

"You're coming to-night, old man," said Van Ness, amiably. "Shall we pick you up at the office or the club?"

Caldwell shook his head. "Can't get off, possibly, to-night," he said, and marveled at his own cheerful tone. "I just called to tell Miss Day so. We're going to have a grand rush at the office to-night, and I'm short a man."

"Good-by, Princess," he said, depositing Marjorie tenderly in the chair he had vacated. "No Country Club for you, either. You're to stay at home and be the Sleeping Beauty. Now, mind you look the part."

"And do you think the Prince might *really* come?" said that wee damsel, breathlessly.

"I think he'd find it hard to stay away, your highness," he said, gravely, and bent to kiss the chubby little hands in courtier fashion.

"Good-by," he said to Patricia, cheerfully; but there was finality in his tone.

"I'm sorry you aren't going to-night," she said, gently.

"Well, if it's all settled, I'll walk down with you," said Van Ness, genially. "I've got to order the 'bubbles' around, and look after things a bit. If I'm back at six?"

"I'll be quite ready," said Patricia, calmly.

The room seemed suddenly empty as the door closed behind them.

She flung herself down before the chubby figure in the chair.

"It's very odd about being five," commented the juvenile philosopher, "the things you can do and the things you can't. Knees are very nice, and all that, but you must never hint to anyone but mother about candy or anything that costs money, and 'most everything I want *does* cost money. Yet I s'pose you can do that when you're grown up. Did you hint about the runabout, Aunt Patty?"

"I didn't, I *didn't,*" said Patricia, with muffled vehemence. "Oh, Marjorie—Marjorie, dear—how I wish I was just a little girl!"

"You're kissing just where Mr. Caldwell kissed," commented the youthful sage.

. . . . . .

It is not given to many to be gifted both with the wisdom of the children of this world and the wisdom of the children of light. Marjorie was groping in both directions. Not only was she mastering the conventions, but she was solving for herself the spiritual problem of obtaining direct answer to prayer. Her mother, following in the footsteps of the generations since Salem, was fiercely Protestant, but Marjorie was intuitively a Romanist. She had grown to believe firmly in the advantages of an intercessor. She believed, too, in asking different intercessors for different gifts. Since one could not *hint,* it solved the problem of obtaining one's heart's desires. If her mother sometimes wondered at the gifts which her small daughter took quite as a matter of course, she did not connect them with the pious request to let her say her prayers to this or that caller at nightfall, and the impassioned plea of the small, tense figure invariably brought forth good fruit in due season.

So it befell that, watching the little girl across the street promenading in all her summer bravery, a new ambition was born in Marjorie's breast—a desire for possession far and away beyond any former desire; and, casting about in her mind for the proper intercessor, she made choice of her very prettiest aunt.

It was rather a wistful Patricia who sat at the foot of Marjorie's small brass bed, listening to that young person's excited but explicitly worded petition. "Just like hers, Lord, unless it could be a little prettier, an' pink, an' a ruffle, an' please bring it *very* soon."

And Marjorie's sleep was untroubled, for Patricia's smile had been encouraging. And directly after luncheon, the very next day, arrived a parcel, long and slender, and as Marjorie opened it it disclosed—oh, joy of joys!—the apotheosis of the parasol. It was a glorification of the little girl's across the street; it made one really sorry for her. It was frilly with multitudinous frills, rose-colored, as one dreamed the fairy princess' parasol might be; it was like the strawberry ice in the tall champagne glasses, which was one of the few desserts not voted harmful. It was ideal!

Her mother scrutinized the box in which it came. "It's disgracefully extravagant on your part, Patricia," she said, disapprovingly—"the idea of buying it *there.* And gingham would have been exactly as well as taffeta."

"Oh, let her have her rose color in all its bravery while she can," said Patricia, listlessly. "It doesn't last any too long under the most favorable circumstances."

"You—to be cynical!" said her sister, quickly. "What's the matter? I hoped you and Arthur Van Ness——"

"I can't," said Patricia, simply.

"He's devoted to you."

"Does that make it any easier?" said Patricia, with a touch of anger. "It's the very final reason why I couldn't marry him."

"Then it's the other man," said her sister, and there was honest dismay in her tone. "Oh, Patty, *Patty,* don't tell me you're throwing Van Ness over for young Caldwell! I thought you gave him his *congé* a week ago. He's a dear, I'll grant you, but think——"

"Suppose we just drop the subject," said Patricia, steadily. "But, since I've lost my rose color, don't grudge me the pleasure of giving Marjorie hers. So you like the parasol, Toddlekins?"

Marjorie climbed up into her lap, parasol and all.

"Aunt Patty," she whispered, "couldn't you just *hint* to Mr. Caldwell that you'd like some more rose color?"

"Not for anything in the world," said Patricia, firmly.

"Aunt Patty," whispered the wise one, mysteriously, "why don't you pray?"

Patricia gathered her close in her arms. "I do, Marjorie, I do," she whispered, and her voice caught in a little sob.

Caldwell was riding along the shore with a mind as blue as the lake before him. It was his day off from the office, and it was the first week he had ridden alone. When he and Patricia had guided their horses along this path together, all the blues had been turquoise; now he found them indigo. The bay mare felt her master's depression. She curveted gently to coax him to a canter. She fretted daintily at the bit, but still he rode on moodily, unseeingly.

He came back suddenly from a dream world of mournful retrospect with the consciousness of a child's screams, shriek following after shriek with a shrill intensity which sent him galloping in their direction at the fastest possible pace. Some child was being killed—tortured! Just Heaven! only to be in time! He spurred the bay mare desperately around the last curve.

There on the very edge of the boathouse wharf stood a small, solitary figure, an infant epitome of sorrow and rage and despair, and as he flung himself off his horse and rushed toward her he recognized in her woe-distorted countenance the small person he was wont to cuddle for the sole reason that she was the niece of her aunt.

"Marjorie," he cried, picking her up and shaking her, with the vague idea that the process might stop the shrieks which were continuing with the regularity of an alarm clock, "what's the matter, child? How did you get here alone? What is it?"

"My parasol!" sobbed the infant Niobe; and, following the direction of her outstretched arms, Caldwell beheld, floating on the bosom of the lake, a tiny rose-colored sail, dainty enough for the chambered nautilus, now retreating on a receding wave, now advancing beguilingly only to retreat again.

"How did it happen?" he demanded.

"Aunt Patty gave it to me," she explained, gaspingly. ("Bless her!" murmured Caldwell.) "'N' I was playin' be a lady, 'n' I ran away to walk on the beach just as she does, 'n' the wind came 'n' it flew right away." She raised her voice again.

"Stop, for Heaven's sake! You'll be sick. I'll get it for you. Don't stir, or I'll never come back," commanded Caldwell, and rushed towards his boathouse.

The next moment he was propelling his course towards the coquetting sail. To reach it, to return, to restore it to its owner was the work of minutes; to observe her rapture as she held it proudly over her head would have repaid a more perilous adventure.

"Rather drippy, isn't it?" he commented.

She laughed sunnily. "It's like a real rainstorm," she said, delightedly; "when they won't let you go out, you know."

"H-m-m," said Caldwell, meditatively. "I'm rather glad you take it that way; still, even damaged rose color is better than none at all."

"That's why I am sorry for Aunt Patty, you know," she said.

"What's the matter with your Aunt Patty?" he said, sharply. "Is she ill?"

Marjorie shook her head wisely. "Oh, no, not ill at all," she said; "but she's lost her rose color. She told mother so."

Caldwell went white to the lips. He picked the small damsel up and sat her firmly on the bay mare's back.

"Now, tell me," he said, grimly, "precisely what your Aunt Patty told your mother. What about the rose color?"

"She's lost it," said Marjorie, simply. "She feels badly. I think it made mother feel badly, too. And Aunt Patty can't even *hint*. But she *prays*."

Caldwell dropped his head on the bay mare's neck with a groan.

"For the love of Heaven, whom does she pray for? Patty! *Patty!*" he whispered.

"For you," said Marjorie, simply.

He drew a breath that was almost a sob. "Where is she now?" he said, fiercely. "Think—what was she going to do?"

"She went to the park," said Marjorie, mechanically, "just to be alone."

He flung himself into the saddle, and swung her dexterously in front of him, the parasol held high above her head like a rosy pennant of hope; and, spurring his steed impatiently, he sped forth on his quest to find his lady like a knight of old.

He knew her favorite corner in the park—a bench secluded, where they had often tethered their horses and talked at twilight time. He never doubted for a moment that it was there he should find her, and there it was.

She had dismounted and stood with her arms around her horse's neck, a slender little figure in her black habit.

She looked up startled as he threw himself off his horse, and deposited Marjorie with tender hastiness on the bench. Her hand went up to her throat, but he caught it in both his own and held it fast.

"Patty! Patty!" he breathed, and the word was a prayer. The air vibrated with the loving stress he put upon it, as though the sighs and vows of all the world's long line of lovers still throbbed sympathetically in the element which had transmitted their potency from heart to heart.

"Is it true, girl?" he whispered, passionately.

"She can't even *hint*," cried the small watcher, excitedly.

The light of joy came back into Patricia's face; the laughter that Caldwell loved to hear bubbled from her lips; but the eyes, that had been as elusive as the will-o'-the-wisp, yielded up their secret unreservedly.

"Not being able to hint was the very worst part of it all," she avowed, gayly, and the laughter pulsed in her voice.

"But you *knew*," said Caldwell, uncomprehendingly, "and you knew that it was only because Van Ness could give you all the things I wanted to give you that I went away."

Patricia swung towards him impulsively. Two slender, white hands caught hold of his coat sleeve, and shook it ever so daintily.

"I wonder," she said, mockingly, "when you stupid, *stupid* men will find out that it's not what a man *can* give a woman, but what he *wants* to give her, that really counts."

Marjorie made another heroic effort to get into the conversation.

"You *have* got your rose color back—in your cheeks, Aunt Patty."

"In my life," whispered Patricia.

## THE VOYAGE

A MOON on high, a silvery-pathwayed sea,
A boat to land, to meet thee and set sail,
Far and oh, far might well the journey be,
And well the wafting gale.

Laughter and kisses—kisses and one old song,
Wording anew love deeper than the sea,
And all the night and all the stars for long,
Eternal company.

THEODORE DREISER.

# WIVES VERSUS BUSINESS

By Dorothy Dix

MAUD has made a terrible discovery. She has found out that she is not all in all to her husband, and that he has other interests in life besides her. He is kind—oh, yes—and even affectionate when she thrusts herself on his notice; but when she kisses him he gives her a perfunctory little peck on the cheek and says: "Now run away like a good girl. I'm busy." He also absorbs himself in the paper of an evening, instead of holding her hand, and when she talks to him he answers at random sometimes, as one whose thoughts are afar.

"He doesn't even notice what I wear any more," she said, "even when I put on a blue dress, and do my hair with the little curl, the way it was the first time he ever saw me, and when we—er—er—we met."

"Precisely," I said.

"And the other evening," she complained, "he broke an engagement to take me to the theater. He said it was to meet a man from Texas, who wanted to buy a big lot of groceries."

"And you cried yourself to sleep," I said, "and the next morning Jack didn't even notice how pale you looked; and after breakfast you tied a thick veil over your face, and went downtown to a fortune teller, who took you in a dark room and, for the price of a dollar, told you to beware of a blond woman, who was meditating evil against you, or that a dark woman would cross your path who would cause you trouble."

"How did you know?" gasped Maud, in surprise.

"My dear child," I answered, "I have been there. There comes a time in every married woman's experience when she first perceives that she has to take a back seat in her husband's life, and she immediately scents a rival on the breeze. Then she hies away to the fortune teller, and when she goes home she is trying to fit the idiotic description that the fakir gave her on some one of her acquaintances, and that makes trouble; for ninety-nine times out of a hundred it isn't a woman at all. It is business.

"It is true enough, my dear, that a rival has come into your life, but it isn't the Sadie or Mamie you fear; for with American men sentiment is a side issue, and not the real pursuit of life. Nevertheless, you and Jack have come to the very crisis of your fate, when a power, as insidious and as deadly to your happiness as the wiles of any woman is, has begun to creep between your hearts and separate you. It is your husband's occupation. It is a siren that age cannot wither, nor custom stale, nor habit tire of its infinite variety, and only too often it absorbs a man body and soul and mind. It occupies his waking hours, and fills his dreams, and leaves no place for the wife or home. In many and many a divorce suit, if the real co-respondent was named, it would be business instead of some silly man or woman.

"Foreigners are never weary of pointing out the peculiar domestic conditions that prevail in America. Pages and volumes have been written pitying the poor, hard-worked American husband, toiling in his office, while his wife flaunted about like a butterfly at Newport in the summer and California in the winter, or journeyed about Europe and enriched Parisian milliners in the meantime. The American woman has

been denounced from one end of the earth to the other as the least domestic, the most selfish and frivolous woman alive, and nobody has seemed to realize that these conditions are quite as much of the man's making as the woman's, and that often enough the woman who devotes herself madly to society or frantically to clubs, is simply and pathetically trying to fill in the lonely hours that her husband's absorption in his business leave her.

"Statistics show that the ratio of domestic unhappiness is greater among the rich and the well-to-do than among the poor, and the explanation of it is to be found in the fact that the day laborer not only does not work as hard as the millionaire business man, but is less absorbed in his occupation. When the carpenters, or the bricklayers, or the pick drivers finish their ten or eight hours' work, they go home to their families. With their overalls they divest themselves of all thought of their business. Their children climb upon their knees, they are interested in all of the wife's little budget of household news and neighborhood gossip, and the man gives to the woman the companionship for which she married him.

"With the man absorbed in big business enterprises, no such simple, happy family life prevails. Every nerve must be stretched to the breaking point to keep pace with his competitors; ceaseless vigilance and absolute concentration of thought and interest must, he knows, be the price of his success. If he dallies but a month, a year, an hour, by the wayside, somebody who has not let his attention be distracted from the prize for a second will pass him, and he has no time to listen to his wife, or be interested in his children. It is a great game, an absorbing game, a game of never-dying interest he is playing, and the fury of the gambler and the ambition of the man are wrapped up in it, and it pushes everything else out.

"Such a man loves his wife and children. Yes; there isn't a doubt of it. He lavishes upon them the money that he makes. He wants them to be happy and richly dressed, and he will tell you that the reason that he slaves is to support them; but he deludes himself. The real reason is that he has given his innermost heart to business, and she is a jealous mistress that resents a divided allegiance.

"The woman's side of such a story is inevitably a sad one, unless, happily for her, she is a doll stuffed with sawdust that can find sufficient amusement in dressing and undressing herself, and few American women are of that caliber. If a woman has any heart and sense, she wants something more than clothes; she wants something more than a home that is nothing but a house and furniture. She wants the love and companionship of her husband, and no amount of money or success can compensate her for them.

"More than once, my dear, have I seen this curious tragedy of the commonplace, where business drove Cupid away from the hearthstone, enacted. I recall just now one case of peculiar pathos that ended in the wrecked life of one of the most beautiful and sensitive women I have ever known. This woman, while a young girl, married an ambitious man, who was absorbed in business, and who, after providing her with a luxurious home, left her absolutely to her own devices. She had *carte blanche* at the milliners and dressmakers, he lavished money on her, her horses and carriages were observed by all as she drove in the park. He gave her everything—except himself.

"He was always too busy to go out with her. He rushed through his meals in order to get back to his office, and when she protested against being left so much alone he scolded her for a woman's unreasonableness in wanting him to neglect his business. 'You have plenty of money,' he would say to her; 'what else can you want?'

"But it seemed that she did want more. She wanted love and sympathy, and companionship; and there came a day when she found it in forbidden paths. When their home lay about their feet in ruins the husband turned on her with bitter reproaches for her ingratitude, telling how he had toiled and slaved for her; but, lifting a hand to stop him, she cried out, passionately:

"'I know,' she said, 'that I have sinned, but part of the blame for all this rests upon you. If you had cared more for me, and less for your business—if you had neglected, as you call it, your business more and me less—I should not be here to-day. You thought of nothing but your business, and offered me nothing of what a woman wants in love and attention. Since we were married you have never spent any time at home with me. Your house was nothing but a lodging house in which to sleep, and a restaurant in which to eat; and no sooner would you be through a meal than you would go out, leaving me to spend the long, lonely hours the best way I could. Did you never think that a woman could get tired of driving endlessly about, even in a fine carriage, or of staring at the servants who pitied her for her loneliness?

"'Oh,' she went on, wearily, 'I know you have been good to me, and that you even loved me in your way; but you didn't love me as you did your business; you didn't think of me continually as you thought of that; I didn't interest you as it did; and so I was starved for everything a woman wants, and when it was offered me I took it. Divorce me if you will, but do not try to lay the blame all upon me. If I have sinned against you, you sinned against me first.'

"Fortunately, this is an extreme case. Most women find refuge in their children, or philanthropy, or clubs, or society; but before a man blames his wife for running off after fads, let him ask himself if he hasn't forced her to take refuge in them.

"Men will say, and justly, that back of every happy home there must be a successful business, and that the wife who is jealous of it is killing the goose that lays the golden egg. That is also true, but there is moderation in all things, and love and business should not be antagonistic, but partners. They should share equally, and when either one gets the upper hand in a man's life something is out of balance that will throw the whole machinery out of gear.

"Women don't want money as much as they get the credit of doing. They take it when they can get nothing else, for, at bottom, women are shrewd philosophers; but many and many a wife would gladly exchange her diamonds and horses and carriages for a little more of her husband's society, and a dead-moral certainty that she could raise as intense a heart throb in him as the price of stocks does.

"As for you, my dear, inasmuch as you are bound to always have a rival in your husband's affection, remember the wise wife is the one who makes friends with the object of her jealousy. Thus, like the Mormon wives, they share the husband's heart between them, and keep out interlopers. There is no other tie between people stronger than a community of interest, or hobbies, or common knowledge; and the woman who never wearies of discussing the price of green groceries, who can scheme and plan by the hour for the enlarging of the butcher shop, or the store, or who can absorb herself in her husband's law cases, or magazine work, or whatever it is, has turned defeat into victory, for she has taken a hand in the game herself instead of merely standing by and looking on. Such a woman is never jealous of her husband's business, or complains that he gives too much time to it. On the contrary, she eggs him on, but they dwell together in peace and harmony.

"The fault of the age is that we measure everything by the almighty dollar, even affection; and it is time that every married man should pause and ask himself if, in the very intensity of the love of his wife that makes him want to give her luxury, he is not robbing her of that which makes all that money can buy mere dross. Love, sympathy, companionship—these are three eternal needs of a woman's soul; and, having them from her husband, the poorest woman alive is rich, and, lacking them, the richest woman is poor indeed."

# THE ETERNAL MASCULINE

By Katherine Metcalf Roof

"YOU are all alike," sighed Barbara. "Men have no sense of climax." She lifted her glass of tisan to her lips; a shaft of sunlight struck across it in an oblique bar of gold.

Lawrence smiled and thoughtfully broke off another piece of bread. "You are so inclusive, and—conclusive. If one is tone deaf or color blind he is an object of pity; and pity we all know to be akin to——"

"I have suspected it for some time," she went on, with an effect of soliloquy; "to-day you proved it."

He looked up inquiringly.

"When you *began* with the heart of your artichoke!"

He laughed. "It was unepicurean."

She frowned. "It was inartistic."

As his gaze remained upon her he forgot to answer. People were apt to stare at Barbara—first a glance, then a longer look, then a stare. She had blue-violet eyes, wide apart, and dark hair which she wore plainly parted in the middle. She had a bunch of corn flowers in her belt. Lawrence had bought them of a child on the street, because, he said, they were the color of her eyes. Looking into these eyes now, he realized a necessity to speak.

"One might differ as to what constituted climax," he ventured, "and as to the climacteric moment."

"After a month's acquaintance," she protested, "to bring up such a question!"

"But we have heard of each other for years through the Carrols—only we had not happened to meet. It is not as if we had been absolute strangers. And a week on the steamer is equivalent to a year on dry land."

"It should not be."

"But wasn't it?"

The waiter interpolated the salad. Barbara leaned back and watched the ripple and flash of the water. They were lunching on one of the little islands in the Lac Inférieur in the Bois. The grass was patterned with leaf shadows. The sky was the joyous blue sky of France, and the white clouds were idle, noonday clouds. The trees flung an occasional fragmentary green tribute upon the white tablecloth. The restaurant cat sat beside them on the grass with upturned head and languid, watchful eyes. Her tail, wrapped neatly about her feet, had some slight motion about the tip. A lapdog belonging to a French couple at an adjoining table, ignominiously tied to a chair leg, strained toward his enemy, shivering, impotent.

*"En bas, vilain!"* cried the French woman, sharply, administering a little cuff to the dog. She glanced toward Lawrence. Her pale, powdered face, pink eyelids, and theatrically planned lace toilet had, in the open air, the effect of a gas jet lighted in full daylight. Lawrence's eyes went quickly to Barbara's sunburned cheek, and lingered lovingly upon the small freckles across her nose.

"A true sense of climax," she observed, austerely, "involves an appreciation of all that precedes—prepares, if you like. There can be no climax if there has been nothing to prepare for it—nothing to compare it with. An explosion is not a climax."

"In a play," he remarked, attacking his salad, "every act ends with a climax."

She nodded. "Of course—progressive climaxes leading to the ultimate. But if you begin at the end, the way Aunt Helen reads novels——" She broke off with a sigh. "Men are so *sudden,*" she complained, "and—elementary. You, for instance—you are like a little boy in a garden, who is in such a hurry to reach a beautiful fountain in the center that he runs past all the little bypaths and flowers along the way."

"And some women," he exclaimed, with a flash of insight, "would be content to linger forever in one of those little paths by the way."

"One does not want to rush past without stopping, or to hurry too quickly to realize the roses by the way. But all men are like that."

"Are they?"

"American men. A Frenchman——"

"Oh, a *Frenchman!*" His tone swept her intended characterization out of reach. He went on, before she could capitulate: "I had an idea that women preferred the other sort of man."

"What sort?"

"The man of action. The man that takes without asking." He perceived his error at once, but it was too late.

"A man's generalization about women," she exclaimed, slightingly.

He plunged in further. "It isn't true, then?"

Barbara leaned back, the salad being concluded. Her eyes became dreamy, her mouth less severe. "A woman likes a man who never takes without asking; a man who understands, and remembers, and forgets."

He repeated the sybillic utterance with knit brows. "'A man who understands, and remembers, and forgets'"—he looked up—"*what?*"

"A man who understands without translation what she says, and feels, and thinks."

"My child," he cried, "such an one would be not man, but God!"

She laughed as she continued: "One who remembers what she says, and what she likes and doesn't like; one who forgets other things, and people, and engagements, when he is with her; a man who remembers everything he ought to remember, and forgets everything he ought to forget."

"Which, being translated, means, remembers everything he ought to forget."

She raised her eyebrows.

"To remember her favorite flower, her favorite music, the little things she said, in this place or that—that way madness lies. It would cut off all chance of escape."

"Of *escape?*"

"From possible heartbreak, if things didn't go his way."

The arrival of the Gervais and Bar le duc broke into the discussion. When the facile, impressive waiter had left them, Lawrence gave out the result of his silence.

"A woman's ideal, then, is a combination of the French professional lover who never loses his self-consciousness in working out the color-scheme of his love duo, and a Don José who forgets his duty when Carmen is pleased to dance."

She laughed. "I like 'the color-scheme of a love duo.' It is worthy of a modern critic of all arts."

"Now, I, for instance, *do* remember my engagements when Carmen dances. I am deficient in sense of climax, and—to abandon the phraseology of art—I invariably say the wrong thing."

"Worse than that—you never say the right one."

He reflected. "As nearly as I can remember, for the last two weeks I have said nothing except that I love you."

"The spoken words," she interposed, quickly, "should be the climax, not the preparation. It is not a thing to be said too soon or—too often. Love"—insensibly her voice altered as she said the word—"should be first an implication, a suggestion, a thing proven by deeds."

"There is a whole lifetime for that," he answered, gravely.

In spite of herself, she changed color.

"'To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,'"

he quoted, softly. "You have not thought far enough; the words are not the climax."

"Do look at that waiter's face!" she exclaimed. "He has just given the cat her lunch. Just see him watching her! Did you ever see such paternal joy—such sympathy?"

Being somewhat more versed in the psychology of woman than he was supposed to be, he tended to be elated rather than cast down by this digression.

"No one can appreciate the cat like a Frenchman," he agreed, equably, "either in books or art."

She glanced at him from under her eyelashes. "Now, I like that side of you so much better," she observed.

"Better than——"

She looked at him. He smiled and bit his lip. "To return to our conversation—it is a little difficult in these days to go about proving oneself by noble deeds. I am neither artist nor soldier; they are about the only chaps that have any opportunity for that sort of thing nowadays. I have never been near starving, and I shall probably never be a millionaire. I am just an everyday man, idiotically in love, and unable to conceal it or to learn that gradual art of climax which, I am given to understand, is the only road to a woman's heart—at least, to the heart of the only woman I am concerned with."

There was a slight pause. She pushed back her chair. "We have finished, haven't we?"

He beckoned to the *garçon* and settled in such a way as to produce a great efflorescence of smile, gesture and last attentions. Then they wandered about the little island. There happened to be but few people there that day. They sat down on the grass under the trees in a spot quite isolated and apart, and watched the white ducks drifting about on the water. Barbara took off her hat and leaned her head against a tree trunk. He watched her with that confliction of nameless emotions which has but one name. The silence began to contain vibrations. His eyes went to the bunch of flowers that moved with the drawing of her breath.

"Give me one of the corn flowers," he said, abruptly.

Her hand felt vaguely for the bunch. Her eyes came slowly around to his. "Please," she suggested, and started to smile; but as she met his eyes the smile faded. She gave him the flower without comment.

The air was warm with the full-blown heat of noonday. It smelled of the grass, the fresh water, and the vague scent of some flower. Barbara changed her position.

"If it could only last forever!" she said.

"*Barbara!*" He caught her hand. The color flashed over her face. She drew back her hand.

"I meant the day," she said; "the sunlight and blue sky, and the water, and all that."

He did not answer. She did not look at him.

"It must end so soon," she went on. Her cheeks were still hot, but her tone was quite cool. "It seems a pity. The end of anything nice is a pity."

"Yes," he said. She glanced at him. He was looking off at the water; his jaw looked very set. "It must end—Friday."

"So soon as that?" escaped her.

"I have to go back to England, and then home. I shall probably only see you once more. If you do not decide differently, perhaps never. I shall not come back." He turned and looked at her. Her face had not changed. "It does not seem to trouble you much."

"Men usually say that. And it never is never. They always do come back."

"I shall not come back," he said. Still looking down, she smiled. Something hot flashed up within him. "We will settle it to-day."

Something cold responded in Barbara's eyes. "If it must be settled to-day, then you do not come back."

He rose and walked to the edge of the water, and stood there looking off, with knitted brows. Some ducks, under the impression that he was about to feed them, swam hurriedly toward him with discordant cries. He heard something strike the water with a soft plash. The ducks scattered. Looking up, he saw the bunch of corn flowers lying upon the green surface of the pond. He

turned and saw her standing near, her eyes fixed upon him.

"They were faded," she explained. He looked at her silently. A small, cruel impulse came to her. She drew the flower she had just given him from his loose, moody clasp. "Yours is faded, too," she said, with a little smile. But her eyes fell before his, and the hand holding his flower dropped at her side.

"It is time to go home," he said, in a choked tone.

"I was just going to suggest it," she replied, sweetly.

They were rowed over to the mainland in a slow, flat-bottomed scow. The water gave back the reflections like a mirror. A faint, occasional breeze ruffled her hair. They did not speak for that moment in the little ferry, but after they had discovered their cabman and were driving home they had a very animated, unflagging conversation about French traits, landscape and literature, and art and life in general.

At the door of the little hotel where Barbara and her aunt had taken an apartment, they said good-by. His manner was calmer than his eyes.

"It is the end, then?" he said. His voice was not altogether steady.

"It is the end," she repeated, evenly. But again her eyes fell. Insensibly he waited. She did not speak, but drew back a step. He put out his hand blindly. "Good-by," he said.

"Good-by," she answered. Her voice did not falter.

That evening a box of flowers arrived for Barbara's aunt, with a note regretting Lawrence's sudden departure for England and the consequent necessity to leave without giving himself the pleasure of calling to say good-by.

Barbara sat alone in the parlor of their little apartment in the candle light. An unopened book lay in her lap. She had excused herself from dinner before the others had finished on the plea of a headache. She held in her hand a withered blue corn flower. She sat very still, staring at the candle flame with unseeing eyes. The draught from the open door blew it to one side, almost extinguishing it. As she looked down at the limp little flower, a mist came before her eyes. She bent down and pressed a sudden kiss upon it. She heard a step in the hall and glanced around quickly, then arose. It was Lawrence.

"You!" she stammered. "I thought it was Uncle James." They looked at each other without speaking. "You didn't go—you have come back," she said, at last.

"I have come back," he answered, a little breathlessly. He continued to look at her. She tried to think of something —anything—to say, but remained dumb.

"They told me downstairs to come right up. They said you were up here, and were expecting me, and that the others were still at dinner."

"Yes; I was expecting Uncle James."

A shadow of a smile passed over his face. Uncle James weighed nearly three hundred pounds. "I knew it was a mistake—but I came."

"No," she said, tumultuously; "it was not a mistake——" Then she stopped.

He came a step nearer. His eyes fell upon the drooping corn flower in her hand. She saw the glance, and her hand moved to conceal it.

"That isn't—it can't be—it isn't mine," he stammered. A fierce little flash of hope leaped into his eyes.

She smiled faintly, blushed, and looked down. "No; it is mine," she said.

He caught her hand with the flower. "They are mine," he said. His clasp tightened. She nodded.

. . . . . .

"I had to come and ask you once more," he said.

"But you didn't—you took without asking," she answered.

"The kind of man a woman never loves."

She smiled. "I told you you would come back," she replied.

# A BIT OF FINESSE

By Elizabeth Duer

"MAY I ask how you propose to support my daughter?" inquired Mr. Bond, keeping his finger on a line of the time-table he was studying, and hardly raising his eyes. It was evidently more interesting to him than his daughter's future.

John Muncaster was not easily snubbed.

"Much as I keep myself," he answered; "partly on my salary, partly on a small personal income, and partly on my mother."

"And nearly wholly on what you hope to get from me," Mr. Bond suggested, with a smile at once sly and offensive.

Young Muncaster kept his temper.

"That is a matter for you to settle with"—he hesitated whether to say Violet or Miss Bond—"Miss Bond. I can offer her comfort, even luxury, without it."

He sat facing Mr. Bond, with the library table between them. He was a tall, active-looking youngster, with shoulders a trifle too broad for the depth of his chest, and a face more keen than sensitive, but handsome, as many American men are handsome, through delicacy of feature and vividness of coloring. His hair and small mustache were black, and his complexion healthy and clear.

The elder man was short and broad—particularly stubby in feet and hands, with a fine dome to his bald head, and a mouth like a gash across his face—at once strong and sensual. His eyes, however, redeemed the expression from coarseness; they were clear as a child's, blue-gray in color, and were wont to take on a far-away look that suggested more lofty ponderings than the fluctuations of the stock market. Those eyes presented a valid excuse for the fetish worship Charles Bond commanded from his wife and daughter. There was little else distinctive in his appearance except a stubbly red beard, and sparsely growing red hair, rapidly turning gray.

The time-table appeared to have yielded up the information required of it, for Mr. Bond made a black pencil mark (by first licking the lead) at the line which read, "Cedar Hill, 5:05," and then looked over his eyeglasses at John Muncaster.

"I don't think you mentioned what Rollins and Company give you in the way of salary," he observed.

He found he had an hour before train time, and felt free to dispose of his visitor by a process of humiliating exposition.

"Fifteen hundred," said John, shortly.

"And your personal income?" pursued Mr. Bond.

"Less than a thousand during my mother's life."

"Ah!" said Mr. Bond, looking dwarfishly hateful.

"My mother is very comfortably off, sir, and has only two children," said the young man, beginning to lose courage.

"We won't discount her death," said Mr. Bond. "As the case stands, you invite my daughter, who has no practical knowledge of money, to marry you on twenty-five hundred a year. Why, man alive! her dressmakers' bills are twice that by themselves. If you asked me plainly what I would settle on her, I should have more respect for your brains and your truth."

He opened a table drawer and took out a package of letters, neatly filed.

"These are a few of the proposals I have received for my daughter—most of them from titled foreigners. Yours, being verbal, cannot share their tomb; but I give you the same answer—an unequivocal 'No!' And let me add the request that you will not take up my time again until you can offer me some better reason why you should marry her than a bread-and-butter love and next to nothing a year."

John drew himself up and answered, with spirit:

"I haven't done anything distinguished, and I haven't made my pile—I fancy you hadn't, either, at twenty-five—but I shall make it, all the same! The great point is that Violet loves me."

"It is time enough to inquire into the state of her affections when you *have* made it; when—let me see, who did you say you were with? Rollins and Company?—well, when Rollins and Company find you so valuable that they take you into partnership on your merits." He pushed back his chair as if to end the interview, adding: "I think, Mr. Muncaster, we have had enough of this."

"I am sure *I* have," said John, springing to his feet. "You could hardly have treated me with more discourtesy if I had tried to rob you."

"That is very much the way I look upon fortune hunters—as impudent robbers," said Mr. Bond, savagely.

"I suppose it is idle to reiterate that I don't want your money," said John, patiently; "but may I ask whether you will allow me to speak to you again on this subject the day I am taken into partnership by Rollins and Company?"

"I mayn't be alive by that time," said Mr. Bond, sarcastically, but looking keenly at the young man who ventured to be so persistent.

Perhaps he admired the dogged expression of John's face, for he added, with some kindness:

"I will agree to that, Mr. Muncaster. You may come to see me the day Mr. Rollins takes you into his firm. At least, you will have won my respect, if you do not win my daughter."

John shut the library door behind him, and, getting his coat and hat, went out into the sharp autumn air.

The house, a monstrous pile of rich man's folly, had its frontage on a lake, while at the back the garden rose terrace upon terrace, terminating in the crystal domes of graperies and peach houses. Mr. Bond, with grim humor, had called the place Bondage, and truly to a man of town-bred habits the care of such a country seat hung like a chain.

Muncaster passed round the east end of the house, and came upon the garden still lit by the glow of a November sunset. Here he paused, as if doubtful which alley to pursue, till instinct led him to the most sequestered, and there, pacing up and down, was the lady of his love.

Violet Bond was of the old-fashioned angel type—melting blue eyes, rose-leaf complexion, a pure forehead and a touch of prim holiness about the upper lip; very lovely, very narrow, very much the man's ideal of the perfect woman.

Her short walking skirt hung admirably, her jacket sublimated the tailor's art, her furs were sable, her little hat of the same rich fur.

She quickened her step as she caught sight of Muncaster.

"What did he say?" she demanded, almost before he was within hearing distance.

"He said *no* about as brutally as he knew how," answered John, shortly.

"Papa couldn't be brutal, dearest," said Miss Bond. "You must have misunderstood him."

John didn't argue the point. The perfect woman is characteristically and of necessity the extenuating angel.

"He called me a fortune hunter, and said I expected to support you on his money. Now, Vi, it's up to you to vindicate my character. Marry me on what I have, and he will be forced to acknowledge that we are not mercenary."

Miss Bond was clinging to his arm, her face raised with the sad appeal of the lady in the Huguenot Lovers.

"I couldn't disobey him, my darling," she sighed. "Mamma and I have never contradicted his slightest wish."

"If you had he might be less intolerable," burst from Muncaster.

"Oh, John! Indeed you must not speak so of papa. You don't appreciate what a great man he is. We are so proud of him."

Though angry, John could adore her loyalty.

"I'm afraid you have to make your choice between us," he said, first kissing her passionately and then putting her away from him. His keen young face was glowing with both love and resentment.

The angel wouldn't stay put away. She fluttered back, and her arms clasped his neck, sable muff and all.

"I love you first and best," she whispered, "but we must wait for his consent. Think again, John—didn't he give you a chance to win me? Papa is so just!"

John laughed scornfully.

"He did," he retorted. "Just the trifling task of securing a partnership in the firm of Rollins and Company, and incidentally making my fortune. So simple for a clerk with a beggarly fifteen hundred a year, and a small inheritance chiefly tied up in a house in Harlem."

"There! I knew he had given you a chance!" said his Violet, proudly. "Go to work like a good boy, and we shall be happy yet."

Muncaster's temper snapped, but he kept silence from bad words. Stooping, he lightly kissed the Madonna-like forehead of his ladylove, and plunged through the woods on his way to the station.

He was angry, mortified, disappointed at Violet's failure to sympathize with his humiliations, and he brought his heels down viciously on the dry leaves and branches that strewed his path, as if he were grinding Mr. Bond's insults under foot.

He reached the station a few minutes ahead of his train, and just at the moment when the Western express was due. The Bond depot wagon was driving away, and Mr. Bond, accompanied by his valet and a pile of small luggage, was at the extreme end of the platform.

Muncaster, who had to cross the tracks to take his train from this suburb back to New York, was compelled to wait till the express passed, and found himself standing close, though unperceived, behind his late entertainer.

With a roar the great engine approached, slowed down, and ran well past the little station in order to bring a private car attached to the rear on a line with Mr. Bond.

"Hello, Bond!" cried a stentorian voice of welcome from the front platform of the car. "I hope you've brought thin clothes as well as furs. They say Mexico is as hot as pepper where we are going."

His luggage had been carried into the car while this one sentence was uttered, and the train was again in motion.

Muncaster was free to cross the tracks when, glancing down, he saw what looked to him in the twilight like a legal envelope. He picked it up and hurried across, for his own train was just rounding the curve.

In the brightly lighted smoking car he examined the envelope. It had no address, and was open; inside were several time-tables—official ones—and, followed in the order in which they were placed, they conducted the imaginative traveler to the Mexican Pacific coast. The last of these which John unfolded was equipped with a large map of Mexico, its railroads marked like blood-red arteries, while the particular branch leading from Mariposa to the Gulf of California had received some pen-and-ink embellishments. It was straightened in half a dozen places, and then curved south so as to make its terminus the important seaport town of Bonita.

John's thoughts were going like a buzz saw, and what wonder! For two years he had been an unremunerated stockholder in that same Mariposa branch of the Mexican Central.

. . . . . .

The next morning, when Muncaster had occasion to penetrate the sanctum of the head of the firm, Mr. Rollins

motioned to him to be seated until a conversation he was carrying on over the telephone should be over. John tried politely to abstract his attention by employing his eyes; and these, roaming at will, fell upon some papers exposed on the chief's desk. Did his eyes deceive him or was he dreaming? They were certificates of stock of the Mariposa branch of the Mexican Central.

The interest that Mr. Rollins took in John Muncaster was more than that of an employer. He was a family friend, as well, and sometimes he unbent so far as to have speech with the young man. He now hung up the receiver, swung half round, hooked his toes under the legs of the chair, and smiled. He had the benignity of the moon.

"John," he said, "I have always reproached myself for having let you put money into that Mexican railway, but I think I see a chance now to pull it out without much loss." Here he sighed and shook his head. "I'm free to admit that it was a great mistake—worse for me than for you, for I went in deeper—but the whole thing has been a bad business; they have passed their dividends for two years, and the road is virtually bankrupt. However"—here he brightened—"what I want to tell you is that, oddly enough, within the last week there has been some activity in the stock, and I'm going to sell out, and advise you to do the same. I can't see any reason for this spurt—the road's as dead as Montezuma—but I mean to take advantage of it."

"Thank you very much, but I've a fancy to hold on to that stock, sir," said John.

"My dear boy, you're an ass!" said Mr. Rollins.

"I'm sure I am," John agreed, pleasantly; "but, all the same, I do not care to sell."

"You must have a reason. What is it?" demanded Mr. Rollins.

The young man had a desperate struggle between the obligations of hospitality and love on one side, and of good-fellowship and deference on the other. He had acquired his information when a guest—albeit a departing one—at Bond-age, and even his duty to Mr. Rollins should not unseal his lips.

"I'm not at liberty to say," answered John, a trifle pompously.

Mr. Rollins swung back, facing his desk, and addressed his inkstand.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned; "he's had a tip! John"—solemnly—"a tip is the microbe of disastrous speculation. It does its deadly work so insidiously."

"But I haven't had a tip," said John, looking hopeless.

Persistence on the part of one's superior is trying to the temper. Perhaps Mr. Rollins felt that he had pressed John unfairly, for he dropped the subject (or affected to) and said, kindly:

"I went to see your mother yesterday—in fact, I lunched with her—and she told me that you were spending your holiday near Philadelphia somewhere."

"Cedar Hill," John admitted, reluctantly.

"Oh! That's where Bond has built his fine house. By the way, my boy, let *me* give you a tip; when old Bond says *don't sell*, it is the time to sell just as fast as you can."

He struck his bell, picking up his certificates of stock as he did so. John took the hint and left the room, distinctly annoyed with himself, his mother and his chief, but with his mental forefeet firmly planted on that Mariposa branch.

At the end of two months Mr. Rollins had to acknowledge that wisdom had justified herself out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. The public knew that the great Bond syndicate had taken up the Mariposa branch as their Pacific outlet for the Mexican Central; that Bonita was to have its harbor dredged, and as fine a fleet of steamers as any that leaves a Pacific port; that the few stockholders who had not sold out on the advance found themselves in the possession of highly appreciated securities; and, somewhat to Mr. Rollins' chagrin, among them was John Muncaster.

As the winter wore on, John never allowed himself to be long out of Violet Bond's thoughts. The old advice against sending coals to Newcastle did not deter

him from dispatching boxes of roses to supplement the lavish yield of the Bondage conservatories, and in the matter of bonbons he would have ruined the digestion of a cherub if anything so hypothetical existed. He showed a greed for invitations to Philadelphia that made his friends wonder why these rival functions were so much more interesting than similar entertainments in New York. But what seemed strangest of all was an impulse on the part of Miss Bond to honor with her presence the very balls and dinners that so irresistibly attracted Muncaster from the metropolis.

All this hardly fell under the notice of Paterfamilias Bond, whose bonnet-bee was financial rather than social; but his angelic daughter had calculated to a nicety the size of her mother's heart and the elasticity of her indulgence.

In February John had doubled his capital. His twenty-five thousand had become fifty. Starting with the Mariposa-Bonita business, he had made one bold dash after another till he felt he had tempted fate sufficiently to try that jade's uncertain temper, and he had better cry halt before she turned nasty. So the day before Washington's Birthday he requested an interview with his chief, and came into that gentleman's presence with the subdued gentleness of one about to sever kindly relations.

"Mr. Rollins," he said, "I have been in your office now for four years, and you have taught me all the business I know; in fact, you have been the best friend I have ever had, and that makes me feel that I can come to you for advice. Of course, in an office like yours, there is no advance beyond a certain point, and I have made up my mind that the time has come when I must strike out for myself. Now, what would you advise me to do? I have a capital of fifty thousand dollars that I could turn into a firm to-morrow."

Mr. Rollins had an annoying habit of repeating the salient words in a sentence with forced emphasis.

"Fifty thousand dollars! *Fifty thousand!* Where on earth did you get it? You have that house your father left you in Ninety-ninth Street and some Atchison preferred——"

"I have changed both those investments, sir," said John, modestly, "and made rather a handsome thing of them, too."

"More Bond tips?" inquired Mr. Rollins.

John neither affirmed nor denied the suggestion; a reputed intimacy with a capitalist is an investment in itself. He continued his explanations.

"Then, you see, the Mariposa-Bonita stock has turned out well, so that when I say that I can put fifty thousand into a firm I am rather understating what I could contribute. Still, in point of judgment, I might not do so well outside of this office."

John knew, and Mr. Rollins knew, that this success was entirely independent of the older man's advice, but the sentiment, if disingenuous, was becoming.

"This office," repeated Mr. Rollins, catching the last words in a hazy way. "I should greatly dislike to let you go out of this office, my boy."

"And yet," said John, airily, "I suppose there is hardly a chance of your taking me in here?"

"Taking you in! You mean as a partner? In Rollins and Company? Bless my soul, man! are you made of brass?"

A wave of color passed over John's face.

"It isn't that you would care for the small additional capital I could bring, but I thought possibly my relations with Mr. Bond might influence you," said Muncaster.

"And what may they be?" asked Mr. Rollins.

"Nothing at present," said John, "but, I hope, son-in-law before long."

Mr. Rollins gave a low whistle.

"Ho, ho!" said he. "That's a horse of a different complexion." Then, with a wave of distrust: "Why isn't it announced?"

"It will be when I am taken into your firm, Mr. Rollins."

*"Agreed!"* cried Mr. Rollins, bringing his fist down on his desk.

"Thank you, sir," said John. "May I ask you to keep my secret for a few days?"

"You may, you sly dog!" said his superior.

"And may I depend upon your willingness to confirm my statement to Mr. Bond?"

"By all means, my dear boy, and good luck to you!"

It may seem strange that a man a hundred miles away should know by instinct the domestic plans of a family with whom he was barely upon terms, but Muncaster divined so accurately that he should find the Bonds at Cedar Hill on Washington's Birthday instead of at their town house that he didn't so much as pause in the City of Brotherly Love, but sped direct to their country seat. I may even mention, as a further exhibition of the quality called intuitive tact, that he seemed to guess that he should find Mr. Bond confined to his library by a slight cold, and, moreover, rather tired of his own company.

It was about noon when Muncaster sent in his card, and the servant brought back word that Mr. Bond was not feeling very well, but would see Mr. Muncaster if his business were important.

A cold is apt to make the kindliest peevish.

"Again, Mr. Muncaster!" Mr. Bond exclaimed, as the door shut. "Still harping on my daughter?"

"Still harping," agreed John, "but according to the tune you set me. You may remember that you gave me permission to ask you to reconsider your refusal when I was taken into the firm of Rollins and Company."

"Rollins has taken you in, hey? Where did you get the money?"

"You made part of it for me, sir," retorted John.

"I!" snapped Mr. Bond. "What d'ye mean by that?"

"I mean that I made it in the Mariposa-Bonita deal. I happened to have some inside information that induced me to hold on when other people were selling."

Mr. Bond's face was a study

"I'd like to know where you got your information," he said, with a look of puzzled irritation. "At the time you speak of—that bulge in Mariposa—only three men were in the secret——"

"And one of them," interrupted John, "a celebrated financier, dropped his time-tables and maps and notes as he stepped into a private car on his way to Mexico, and they were found and picked up after the train pulled out by me. But I kept your secret, Mr. Bond."

"From others, perhaps. Apparently you were not above using it for your own advantage," observed the great man.

"All's fair in love and war," said John. "You had set me a prohibitive task, and I was obliged to fight you with your own weapons. Be just, Mr. Bond."

An amused smile was stealing over the features of the capitalist.

"So you think I'm under contract to deliver up my daughter, do you?" he said.

"I think I have won her, from your point of view, sir," said John. "But suppose we leave the decision to her?"

"John Muncaster," said Mr. Bond, "perhaps I know more about your and Violet's affairs than you suspect, and perhaps I have been at some pains to find out how you stand in your own surroundings, and perhaps I think you a fine young fellow, though a *leetle*, just a *leetle*, too sharp even for me. If I take you as my son-in-law, don't let me catch those wits of yours gimleting uninvited through my private schemes or you and I will quarrel. Be good enough to ring that bell."

"My wits and I are entirely at your disposition, my dear sir," said John.

A servant entered.

"Tell Miss Bond I should be glad to speak to her," said Mr. Bond; and then, turning to Muncaster, added: "I shall leave you to make your own explanations to my little girl while I go and talk to her mother. We are old-fashioned people, Mr. Muncaster, and the best thing we can hope for you and Violet is that when you are sixty you will be as dependent upon each other for happiness as my wife and I."

# Bernhardt in "La Sorcière"

By Alan Dale

**Mr. Dale describes in the present article London's French season and the extraordinary success in London of Sarah Bernhardt's new play "La Sorciere," which is to be produced in this country during the coming season, by Madame Bernhardt, and in English by Mrs. Patrick Campbell**

LONDON.

TOWARD the close of each London season the leading stars of Paris are rushed frantically across the Channel, and set up in all their gaudy Gothic glamour in the murky British atmosphere. Every year London gets a fleeting glimpse of Sarah, or Réjane, or Jeanne Granier, or Jane Hading, and occasionally of all four. The very cream of Paris is cast at the feet of London—and for no very obvious reason.

The French stars rarely attract much attention. Nor do they appear to "draw." The only excuse that I can find for their annual siege of London is that they are eager to "conflict" with the perennial Sarah, who is almost as much of an institution here as the lions in Trafalgar Square. Sarah comes to London from Paris, very much as you would go to Brooklyn from New York, and her conception of this English metropolis is probably quite—Brooklyn!

This year London has had Sarah, Réjane and Antoine, and a French repertoire company. All "ran" together, as though for dear life, with the usual result—a boom for Sarah. In London, Sarah's boom is usually independent of her dramatic offering. Her "social" career is really most amusing to the cynical outsider, and it is generally that which counts.

On this occasion, however, Sarah was reinforced by the canny and undaunted Sardou, in his latest play, "La Sorcière," an admirable, Sarah-ic bit of dramatic instruction. As it is to be presented by Sarah in New York, and also by Mrs. Patrick Campbell—in English—I shall tell you something about it, presently.

In the meantime, I can't help smiling at London's "French season." Réjane, who generally advertises herself by an eccentric "turnout" that always attracts attention in the Park, had nothing new to offer London but "La Montansier," which, as I wrote from Paris, was decidedly feeble. She was foolish enough to open with "Zaza," which London hates. Not only that, but she opened in a hurry, with niggardly surroundings.

The London critics were indignant. Réjane was rushed from the railway station to the theater; all the company had suffered from *mal de mer* (don't you think that sounds much less brutal than seasickness?), and the first performance was an ordeal. Just as though London were unable to wait for a presentation that it didn't want! The consequence was frigidity for Réjane, and a poor season.

The French repertoire company—oh! joke of jokes!—undertook to offer a series of the most spicy Capus plays that Paris has ever had. If London had understood them, goodness only knows what would have happened. It was lovely to read the stolid, indefatigable English critics reviewing these Gallic ob-

scenities in choice language, and explaining, in gentlemanly terms, without diagrams, their beauties.

As every incident in each play was so bewilderingly "irregular" that the mere pen spluttered at the notion of imperturbable analysis, you can imagine the ludicrous result of the criticisms.

London critics are half-hearted, poor things. Most of them "do something else" for a living and are consequently disposed to let their criticisms slide. They are not looking for trouble, and if it forces itself upon them—as trouble sometimes does—they take it up tenderly, and are most amiable. George Meredith—who has just been trying to set the United Kingdom to rights, in an interview—declares that the impoverished condition of the British drama is due to the fact that the English critics are too urbane. I think he is right.

In any case, these non-expurgated French plays, produced at the Prince of Wales' Theater, London—shriekingly, ostentatiously and supremely improper —were calmly written around in such a way that even the British matron, discussing her morning kipper, might have been pardoned for booking seats for the series.

And the London censor said nothing. Perhaps in these days of international complications, when perhaps a mere play might prove inflammatory, the London censor has been asked not to "cense" too violently. The king, as we know, wants the newspaper to be invariably kind to other nations. But it seems unjust that native English playwrights should be spanked into silence by the censor, and a French repertoire company, alive with ribald suggestion, should pass unnoticed.

We are always talking about a censor for New York, but when we look at the grotesque and almost idiotic proceedings of the London luminary, we can fight shy of such interference, which seems to be worse than useless. This year the London censor allowed all these Parisian gutter comedies unlimited sway. Two seasons ago, the dignitary arose, in all his might and main, and forbade the production of Marcel Prevost's play, "Les Demi-Vierges," by Jane Hading, unless she changed its name to "Maud."

Evidently the censor doesn't believe that "that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Pecksniff would have made a gorgeous censor for London. A bit of humbug, a spice of hypocrisy, a dash of the sanctimonious—to be shaken up before taking—and there's your censorship.

I wish George Ade would write a comic opera around the London censor. At any rate, I offer him the idea.

As the lady novelist would say, I digress. I had no intention of writing all this. However, I have narrowed myself down to Sarah. Sarah loves London, and has a high old time here, even when she hasn't a high old play. She lays foundation stones, opens bazaars, appears at benefits, heads charity matinées, and is very much sought after. The English papers teem with her. Every time she comes to London, they trot out a series of her most fetching pictures, and every "illustrated" vies with its neighbor in securing a snap shot of her "leaving the theater."

All of which is very nice and pleasing when she has nothing to offer dramatically. I believe that it was King Edward (at least Sarah herself said so, and I hate to contradict a lady) who advised her to play "Hamlet." I shall always have that against him. I can't stand a meddlesome busybody of a king, who induces an artistic actress to unsex herself, and then goes away on his yacht to have a good time. It is so inconsiderate, and so unnecessary.

King Edward—if he were really guilty—does not understand Sarah as well as Sardou does. It was Sardou, in "Fedora," "Tosca," "Theodora," and "Gismonda," who made the Bernhardt's fortune, and incidentally—oh! quite incidentally—his own. And now, in his virile septuagenarianism, he has again catered successfully to Sarah in "La Sorcière." It is an exceedingly interesting and striking play, craftily put together, with a view to bringing out the actress' fine points, at the psychological moment.

The psychological moment is, of

course, the fourth act. Sardou's scheme—even when he was not writing for an actress who relies upon "one moment"—has always been to concentrate himself upon the final incidents of his dramas. He is about the only playwright who has ever realized that audiences dine. I do not know whether Sardou himself was a "high liver." I should suspect that he was.

At any rate, in all his plays, the first act is devoted to talk and irrelevancy, to "playing the audience in," as it were. He declines to waste himself upon an incoming crowd of men and women scurrying for seats, and "settling" themselves laboriously. Perhaps he has theories on the subject of digestion, and believes that the nocturnal dinner deserves a little petting. You can generally miss a Sardou first act with impunity. Nothing happens. Characters chatter, and not too interestingly. Sardou fences with his subject—with one eye on the auditorium, so to speak.

It is thus in "La Sorcière," in the first act of which *Zoraya*, the Moorish widow, merely meets the Spanish *Don Enrique*, as she is plucking herbs by the light of the moon. As the action of the play takes place in 1507, when Grenada has fallen, and the Moors and Spaniards do not speak as they pass by, you are easily introduced to the good old Montague-and-Capulet business in a new dress.

The lady works miraculous cures on the poor. She is a widow. Sardou has not made the mistake of asking Sarah to impersonate unsophisticated girlhood. At the close of the first act they are desperately in love, and—well, of course, there is no question of a wedding ring. I honestly believe that if Sarah were ever asked to marry anybody or anything on the stage, she would feel that her artistic reputation was sullied. Love—yes, as much as you like, and as far as you like; marry—that is a question for the *bourgeois*.

In the next act there is trouble. *Don Enrique's* nocturnal visits are less regular, and *Zoraya* feels hurt. Wedding bells are heard ringing melodiously. The audience, of course, guesses what they mean. The Moorish lady, occult though she be, has no inkling of their meaning. This is a bit hard to swallow, but still one *must* have a five-act play!

The bells are for *Don Enrique's* wedding, and he is to marry the governor's daughter, a young lady addicted to sleep-walking, whom *Zoraya* has hypnotized, without knowing anything about her. (Like a good many occult ladies, she is singularly unsuspecting.) As soon as she learns the truth, the play is well started. So are Sarah's tantrums. They begin with a wild shriek at the close of the second act.

In the third act *Zoraya* appears at the wedding festivities, heavily veiled. The bride is in a mesmeric trance, of *Zoraya's* own doing. There is a capital scene between the lovers. The woman confronts the faithless man.

"I do not love her," he protests, weakly. "I do not love her."

Can't you imagine Sarah in this: "That is the way of the brutal and egotistical male," she hurls at him. "You do not love her! But it is to her that you sacrifice me. You do not love her, but I arrest you on the very threshold of the bridal chamber! I should loathe myself as the most despicable of women if I had one thought but of you. I should curse my eyes if they looked upon another face but yours. I could never wash from my lips the indignity of another's kiss. But to you it seems natural to be at the same time the husband of your wife, and the lover of your mistress—to flit from one to the other. *Ah! lâche! lâche! menteur! Le voilà ton amour! Le voilà!*"

Nobody can call a gentleman *"lâche"* like Sarah. She has almost appropriated the word, which is, of course, merely "coward." At this point in the play the ball has been set rolling, and the action never flags.

She begs him to fly with her to Africa, but he compromises. He will pay her an occasional visit, but he will not fly. It is then that *Cardenos*, an agent of the secret police, appears and learns of *Don Enrique's* attachment to the Moorish siren. *Zoraya* will be tried for witchcraft that very night by the Council. There is a combat between the two men,

and the secret police agent is throttled to death.

The fourth is, of course, *the* act, and Sarah lets herself loose in the scene of the Tribunal of the Holy Inquisition—a scene, by the bye, that to the Roman Catholic must be a trifle discouraging, and over which it would be quite possible to work up a little indignation for advertising purposes. (A hint for Sarah when she goes to New York.) Sardou has laid it on thick, and various unfortunates, brought before *Don Ximenes,* are graphically displayed to the audience: One of them is forced by inquisitional methods to declare that *Zoraya* is in league with the devil, and that he has met her at one of his "at homes."

The pitiless examination of *Zoraya* herself; the information borne in upon her that by confessing herself to be dissolute and ungodly she can save her lover-accomplice; her exultant "confession"; her feverish denials, when *Don Enrique,* who is present, hears her words; her contradictions, hysteria, agony, self-sacrifice—all these make up as sensational a scene as the most ardent Sardou lover could desire. It gives one a series of thrills. Such thrills may be illegitimate and perhaps inartistic; but there they are, yours whether you like them or not.

As I said, the action never flags. The prospective bride of *Don Enrique* is still entranced. Impossible to awaken her. She sleeps in the thraldom of hypnotism. Nobody but *Zoraya* has the power to rouse her. Will she? The desperate father appears, and implores her to dehypnotize his daughter.

"You have, like these monks, been pitiless to me," she cries. "You have tortured my lover. I will torture your daughter. Invoke your priests! Ring your bells! Swing your incense! Sing your canticles! Your daughter will awaken only at the sound of my voice. And when my body is nothing but ashes —then she will sleep her last sleep!"

Melodrama, say you? Yes, but very moving melodrama—as far removed from the truck that usually passes by that name as Sardou is removed from Theodore Kremer. Melodrama is not, in itself, to be despised.

*Zoraya* is at last promised immunity from the stake, and freedom to go where she will, if she will rouse the young girl from the lethargy of hypnotism, and upon that condition she consents to do it. The poor little bride is brought in on a stretcher and awakened. The "witch" is free, but the mob, horrified at her apparent powers, seizes her, and is about to confiscate her freedom, when, with *Don Enrique,* she takes some convenient poison and the two die, just by the cathedral of Toledo.

I have chosen to devote much space to this play because—well, because it appealed to me so strongly. I want to see it again. I hope to do so, because it will be presented in New York during the season. Sardou is so thoroughly up-to-date in his treatment of this topic. Of course, you know that he is a spiritualist. A couple of years ago he told me himself that in his earlier life he was a "medium." Said he: "I do not merely say that I *believe* in spiritualism. I *know* it to be a fact, as surely as I know that you are seated there by my side." And I certainly *was* seated by his side, in his own home, at Marly-le-Roi, near Versailles.

In "La Sorcière" he explains witchcraft—as many scientists to-day explain it—as simply the possession of hypnotic powers. He believes that the poor wretches who were burned at the stake owned gifts that are to-day called "mediumistic." To-day we do not burn them at the stake; but in our ignorance, and in our dislike of anything that traverses the conventional, and what we call the "natural," we run our benighted ancestors a close second.

Sardou once wrote a spiritualistic play called "Spiritisme." Virginia Harned appeared in it in New York; Sarah Bernhardt introduced it to London and Paris. It was a failure. It did not even hold a brief for the Society for Psychical Research. But "La Sorcière" is an admirable piece of work. It held me enthralled.

As for Sarah herself, carefully husbanding her resources, which are not as

vital as they used to be, she achieved immense success. It was as though she had taken a new lease of life. It was not the Sarah we used to gasp at in amazement, as she tore the passions to tatters. But the flickering embers of her powers flamed forth fitfully, and she gave us that "one moment."

Her "liquid gold" tones in the earlier portions of the play, were a bit irritating. You knew that she was "saving herself up" for the tantrums in the fourth act. What other actress at two-and-sixty could do as much? Perhaps there is a bit of "rant" in her work to-day; the effort is apparent, the power wanes. Just the same, there isn't a living actress who could have played *Zoraya* as she did.

Physically, she is in fine shape. In the full glare of the lights her face was clear and her throat lineless. After her London season—to which, by the bye, she recklessly added various matinées at outlying playhouses—she flew girlishly to Ireland, returned to the English provinces, and declined to be tired. One cannot be cynical at Sarah's expense. After all is said and done, she is the histrionic marvel of the age.

It was Sarah, too, who dominated the principal freak show of the season—a little affair arranged by the enterprising Mrs. Patrick Campbell, apparently for her own exclusive delectation and exploitation. Mrs. "Pat," with whose performance of *Melisande,* in the Maeterlinck poem, or whatever you like to call it, New Yorkers are familiar—conceived the idea of playing the part in its original French. As the Vaudeville Theater was temporarily hers, she resolved to "present" herself in French at that house, with Sarah as her lover, *Pelleas,* and Sarah's company from His Majesty's Theater in the other rôles.

It seemed a bit odd that Sarah should lend herself to such a scheme, which, on the face of it, suggested that she would come out "second best." However, she did. Perhaps the idea of a little extra advertising appealed to her, for, if the truth must be told, Sarah does not precisely shrink from publicity.

So the freak show took place, on a balmy afternoon, when, if there had been any birds in the Strand, they might have twittered in the sunshine. The prices at the Vaudeville were all raised. Every crank and long-haired advocate of the "artistic temperament" bought a seat. George Bernard Shaw, with a copy of "Pelleas and Melisande," sat in a box, and read furiously throughout the performance. Not once was he seen to look in the direction of the stage.

Sarah, as a perfect gentleman, is not a novelty. I have seen her as *Lorenzaccio,* and *L'Aiglon,* and *Arm-lay* (French for *Hamlet*). The fact that she was adding *Pelleas* to her gallery of ladylike gentlemen was interesting, but not startling. As a matter of fact, there is very little left for this actress to do in the way of novelty.

The freak show was a success; and although Mrs. Campbell played in French, which she spoke with surprising excellence and facility, it was nevertheless Sarah who was "at the top of her class." She was not unduly familiar with her lines. There was a prompter in her immediate vicinity, whose promptitude was both remarkable and audible. In spite of which, the beauty of her work was easily recognized, and the interest shifted from Mrs. Campbell to Mme. Bernhardt. (By the bye, this is the first time that I have called her Mme. Bernhardt. Doesn't it sound stiff and formal?)

All the cranks thought the performance "perfectly bee-yoo-ti-ful, don't-cherknow," and the play has since been repeated. Personally, I prefer "Pelleas and Melisande" in French—which doesn't mean to say that I appreciate it in anything. The symbolic, as set forth by Maeterlinck, seems to call loudly for the carbolic. Certain episodes in this alleged "poem" are exceedingly nauseating, but it is unnecessary to mention them specifically. "Great literature," as somebody has said, "is the result of sanity." Although Maeterlinck, personally, seems to be physically and mentally healthy, his pen always occupies itself with some little kink that is usually inseparable from the disorderly mind.

In English—the language in which our leases, and gas bills, and contracts, and sordid everydayness is couched—"Pelleas and Melisande" is impossible. In a foreign tongue the "poem" is, at any rate, endurable.

During her season at the Vaudeville, Mrs. Campbell produced a new play "with a purpose," called "Warp and Woof," by the reformatory lady known as the Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton. It was just the sort of piece that Mrs. "Pat" might have been expected to produce—a tirade against the abuse of dressmakers. Mrs. Lyttelton, anxious to right wrongs—as most ladies are, when they desert pudding for pen—attempted to champion the cause of the society dressmaker.

Miss Marie Corelli's article on "The Madness of Clothes" has since appeared, and the indications are that great frumps think alike. I have never seen Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton, but I can imagine her. I *have* seen Marie Corelli, attired in those spectacular glories usually associated with "Susan's Sunday out."

"That byrd ys not honest that fyleth hys own nest" is assuredly true; and I dislike to see ladies writing against their own clothes. If they would only allow us to do so! We could be so much more vitriolic, especially as, in most cases, we pay the piper.

In "Warp and Woof" Mrs. Campbell appeared as a fitter in the swagger millinery establishment of *Madame Stefanie*. Somebody was giving a fancy-dress ball, and *Madame Stefanie's* girls were all working overtime, in defiance of the rules and regulations presided over by his majesty's inspector of factories. Mrs. "Pat," in pure black, and a pained look, was working her poor fingers to the bone, and bewailing the illness of her little sister, *Phoebe*, who, in the agonies of phthisis, was also a member of the establishment.

Apparently gentlemen flit around these "shops," just as Johnnies are popularly supposed (and it is pure supposition) to haunt stage doors. Gentlemen—to all left-minded ladies—are tempters. And so *Theodosia*, the fitter, was tempted. He would set her up in a shop of her own if she would love him, not wisely but well. The horror of *Theodosia!* That was where Mrs. "Pat" came in. "I want to be good," she murmured; "I want to be honest."

One scene in this play, or tract, in which the inspector of factories appears, while the girls are smuggled into a dark room, only to be routed out and cross-examined, was entertaining and dramatic enough. The rest was maudlin, overdrawn and self-defeating. In the end poor *Phoebe* died, and *Theodosia* was left lamenting, and apostrophizing a bunch of lilies. Exactly what Mrs. Lyttelton wanted to prove seems hazy. A few girls, to fill an exceptional "order," worked all night at it. That is all. Perhaps if the honorable lady herself had been giving the fancy-dress ball, or if Mrs. "Pat" had been going to it, she might have been more lenient.

Yet "Warp and Woof," being unconventional and devoid of stereotyped situations, cannot be passed over in silence. It had, at any rate, an avowed object, and if that object did not precisely materialize, the announced intention was there. That is "already something." The piece was "somewhat bazaar"—as I heard a lady in the audience pathetically remark.

In New York Mrs. Campbell will probably confine herself to "La Sorcière," upon which she is not calculated to shed any new luster. She will probably accentuate the mysticism of *Zoraya*, and merely suggest the tantrums. In the theater I think—I am not quite sure—I prefer the tantrums. The old-fashioned longing for a thrill or two is always with me. One can get so much mysticism elsewhere.

Another lady, bidding for footlight laurels, was "George Paston," one of whose books I remember very pleasantly.

The play was "The Pharisee's Wife," and it was "tried" at Charles Frohman's Duke of York Theater. Like Mrs. Lyttelton, "George Paston" writes for purpose, not for pleasure. In "The Pharisee's Wife" she seemed rather vexed that there should be "one law for men, another for women."

# FOR BOOK LOVERS

By Archibald Lowery Sessions

**Another view of Mrs. Atherton's opinions. "Rulers of Kings" as a point to her moral. Other books noticed are "The Crossing," "The Woman-Errant," "The Rose of Old St. Louis" and "The Confessions of a Club Woman"**

TO anyone with a sense of humor it is always a matter for special thanksgiving when some one attacks, in a spirit of particularly violent criticism, a subject as to which the critic is himself more than ordinarily vulnerable. Under such circumstances the natural retort, to be sure, savors somewhat of an *argumentum ad hominem*, and is therefore not apt to be fruitful of results—except, perhaps, sometimes to silence the critic, which, indeed, is frequently a blessing fully appreciated—but the opportunity afforded is not easily resisted. At any rate, it is a satisfactory way to put the complainant out of court on the ground that he cannot take advantage of his own wrongdoing, even though it may not settle the dispute on the merits.

It seems to us that this is the predicament in which Mrs. Gertrude Atherton has placed herself in her highly entertaining, if not wholly convincing, article in the *North American Review* on "Why is American Literature Bourgeois?" The article has apparently aroused considerable interest—much more than it deserves, if the truth must be told—and has produced a volume of enlightening discussion out of all proportion to its claims for sound analysis of the subject.

We do not propose to go over the ground covered in the replies to Mrs. Atherton; she herself says that writers, as a rule, can take care of themselves; to which we will only add that magazine editors can be trusted to do likewise. It is because we share Mrs. Atherton's solicitude for the reading public—having noticed that "Rulers of Kings" is the third on the list of the six "best sellers"—that we feel impelled to notice one of her charges in the light of her last published novel.

It has been intimated that Mrs. Atherton probably reads little, if any, current magazine fiction, and that her novel reading has been almost equally restricted. It may be so. She has, at any rate, read "The Conqueror" and "Rulers of Kings." Under such circumstances her contention that American fiction is anæmic, lacks originality and shows no evidence of the creative faculty becomes at least intelligible, even if it is based upon a somewhat insufficient view of the facts.

The type of fiction to which these two books belong is, fortunately for the future of American literature, a decadent type. It is distinctly a class of pseudo-fiction, if we may be allowed the expression, because it consists of a mixture of historical or contemporary fact with an extravagant expansion of familiar facts and characters. To write such stories is one of the easiest of literary achievements; when the secret has been mastered the facility with which a novel may be written is surprising. Whatever may be properly said of magazine short stories, on account of which

Mrs. Atherton despises not only the authors who write them, but the editors who accept and publish them, it is, at any rate, nothing but the truth that many such are published every month that are written at the expense of far greater intellectual effort than is required to write a novel of the class of "Rulers of Kings," "The Conqueror" and "The Great Adventurer," for example.

If it is not actually significant, it is at least interesting to note the undoubted fact of the extraordinary popularity of "Rulers of Kings" in comparison with the rather languid interest displayed in such a book as Joseph Conrad's "Romance." This, at least, is our feeling. We refer to the latter book in this connection because we think that it possesses, to a very striking degree, just that quality of authorship, the lack of which in "Rulers of Kings" exposes Mrs. Atherton, as a literary censor, to the disapproval of even the humblest critic.

The difference between these authors as shown in their two books is the difference between an imagination which has the power to re-create old and familiar experiences into something vitally new, and the imagination that merely reproduces or distorts the hackneyed scenes of everyday life. Stated in philosophical terms, it is the difference between a productive imagination and a reproductive imagination. The material of which "Romance" is constructed is not new; the theme, characters and setting are all familiar; and yet Mr. Conrad has worked them over into an organic vital picture animated by a robust individuality.

"Rulers of Kings," on the other hand, is characterized chiefly by a poverty of imagination. The theme is that—now hackneyed—of the wonderful achievements of a young captain of industry. Fessenden Abbott, the heir to $400,000,000, is educated by his father not only to handle a vast property, but, alone and unaided, to make the United States the greatest country on earth. This, of course, he does, incidentally bringing the Emperor William to his feet. Such minor matters as the labor question, the Monroe Doctrine, every conceivable international complication—everything, in fact, that agitates and disturbs the world to-day—are disposed of without apparent effort by this remarkable young man, who caps the climax by marrying an Austrian archduchess. All this is done by the judicious use of money.

It seems to us that this sort of thing is far from being literature, and requires no appreciable effort of imagination or intellect.

Winston Churchill's new novel, "The Crossing," published by Macmillan, must take its chances, whether justly or unjustly, as one written on an "order." For its "timeliness" inevitably gives prominence to a commercial rather than an artistic motive. We say this, disclaiming any intention to impute a motive, because we think that, in the interest of literary art, the practice of issuing "timely" books—at least, books of fiction—is one to be discouraged.

The book is voluminous, covering 600 pages, and the author's object, as he states it in an "afterword," is to "express in it the beginnings of that great movement across the mountains which swept resistless over the continent until at last it saw the Pacific itself."

More than half of it is devoted to the adventures of the hero, David Ritchie, while yet a boy. His journey through the wilderness from North Carolina to Kentucky, his experiences as a drummer boy attached to the expedition of George Rogers Clarke, through all of which he displayed not only the fortitude but the resourcefulness of a man, his meeting and friendship, in spite of his tender years, with Daniel Boone, Andrew Jackson, Colonel Clark and other historical notabilities, are all described with nearly painstaking care.

The balance of the book is devoted to the narrative of David's expedition, after the settlement of Kentucky, when he has grown to manhood, to New Orleans, his sojourn there, and his meeting finally with the woman he marries.

It is essentially a book of adventure, well told in the main, but there is too much of it, and we are inclined to think

that most readers will find their patience taxed to go through it to the end.

"The Rose of Old St. Louis," by Mary Dillon, Century Company, is another book that owes its being to the centennial celebration of the Louisiana Purchase. In spite of this fact, and of some minor blemishes of style in the somewhat grandiose dialogue of the hero, the plot has real interest, and, on the whole, is well developed. There is a good deal of action in the story; a sensitive critic might say too much, considering the celerity with which the hero moved from one part of the country to another at a time when railroads were unknown; the love story is attractive, dramatic and natural, and the character drawing is creditable. European politics and statesmen, the chief of whom is, of course, Napoleon, are involved owing to the negotiations for the purchase of Louisiana, and are well handled. We think, however, that the author might have profitably omitted transcribing the debate in Congress, which nobody is likely to read.

A curious feature is that the hero goes through the book nameless; even the heroine, in her final surrender at the end, omits to speak her lover's name above a whisper.

"The Double Garden," Dodd, Mead & Co., is a volume of essays by Maurice Maeterlinck. They have appeared heretofore in various magazines, including AINSLEE'S, in which "Field Flowers" was published in the May number.

A considerable variety of subjects is discussed—gambling, dueling, politics, the drama, fortune telling, automobiling and love, among them—all with the subtle and sometimes transcendental philosophy which we have come to expect from Maeterlinck, but which, however, lacks the Emersonian coherence of thought.

The essay which will be probably the most provocative of discussion is that on "The Modern Drama."

We hardly think that the reviewing of books would ordinarily have suggested itself as the background of a love story. But, after reading "The Jessica Letters," G. P. Putnam's Sons, we are disposed to record another lost opportunity. For Philip Towers, who is an editor, and Jessica Doane, one of his reviewers, together developed a very charming love affair. In the course of it they exchanged some serious views, sometimes almost intemperately—which helped to show the quality of their love—particularly in their clash over Miss Jane Addams' opinions on humanitarianism.

The correspondence is extremely clever and interesting, and exhibits two rather uncommon people. It is well calculated to furnish food for thought as well as entertainment.

"The Lyric Bough" is a little volume of Clinton Scollard's poems published by James Pott & Co.

Mr. Scollard, as most readers of magazine poetry know, is a master of the technique of verse making. In rhyme, meter and phrasing he is perfect enough to satisfy the most exacting. Furthermore, in some of his poems, notably those in which some manifestation of nature is the theme, he rises quite above the level of the average modern poet.

There seems to be an idea prevalent that Mr. Gilbert K. Chesterton does not really take himself seriously; and, unless we are mistaken, some critics are inclined to agree with him, if we may judge by the air of good-humored indulgence with which they discuss him.

This, at any rate so far as we have been able to gather, is the attitude which has been assumed toward his new book, "The Napoleon of Notting Hill," published by John Lane.

If we are right in our view that the book is intended by its author as a satire on some of the solemn follies which contemporary "leaders of men" make so much of, it must be, considering how completely the point has been missed, that its subtlety is of a character too delicate for Mr. Chesterton's purpose. We suggest this theory of the book with some hesitation, though we must, at the

same time, confess that reading it in this way has given an enjoyment that mere "nonsense" or "tomfoolery" would have failed to give.

Possibly in anticipation of some of the criticism directed at Mr. Ernest Seton, Mr. Charles G. D. Roberts, in a prefatory note to his new book of animal stories, "The Watchers of the Trails," L. C. Page & Co., states that he has been at particular pains to guard against the fault of "ascribing to my animals human motives and the mental processes of man."

We think that he might have saved himself this trouble, since, so long as he has given us, for our entertainment, a collection of extremely good, even if somewhat familiar, animal stories, objection to their probability amounts only to hypercriticism which all sensible people will disregard.

When all the stories are as good as these it is difficult to say that any one is the best, but we must confess to a liking for "The Truce," because it suggests a brute perception of manliness and sportsmanship in a man.

"A Daughter of Dale," by Emerson Gifford Taylor, Century Company, is a college love story. For Dale University and Oldport it is not difficult to supply Yale and New Haven, especially when it is also remembered that the author is a Yale graduate and at present a member of the faculty.

He has succeeded in imparting to his story a considerable flavor of academic life, and has drawn his characters, Professor Hare in particular, with a good deal of care—possibly a little too much. Paul's perplexities as to his career do not seem to be quite comprehensible, and his misunderstanding of Barbara's state of mind toward him is somewhat overdone, considering the fact that it is so patent to the reader all through the book.

It is a pleasant story, but in no way notable.

"The Diary of a Musician," edited by Dolores Marbourg Bacon, Henry Holt & Co., will promptly and inevitably be classed with the confessions of Marie Bashkirtseff and Mary McLean.

The publication of this diary is, of course, accompanied by half-veiled intimations that it is not fiction, and it has even been suggested that this musician, who is referred to as X, is no other than Kubelik, though we cannot see that it adds anything to its interest.

X is a Bohemian peasant-born genius, and, like other representatives of the class, is, of course, subject to none of the moral laws that are observed—more or less strictly—by less gifted people. And the fact, perhaps, that he is a masculine genius, protected by the cloak of anonymity, makes his confessions less reserved than they would otherwise be—and possibly also will make them more popular.

The habit of confession is apparently not yet broken. When it first began we were led to believe that somebody was prepared "to confess humbly his faults and pardon beg," and not unnaturally readers experienced a sensation of pleasurable anticipation at the prospect of interesting disclosures. But so far in the series there has appeared no symptom of a conscious need of pardon. On the contrary, the very fact of publication seems to imply some degree of pride in the result.

The latest of these is called "The Confessions of a Club Woman," by Agnes Surbridge, Doubleday, Page & Co. It is the history of the rise and fall of Johnaphene Henning—Johnaphene was really her name; it was an inspiration of her father's.

A Kansas country girl, she came to Chicago as the wife of Joseph Henning, who kept a corner grocery. As he prospered she became the prey of a divine discontent, and finally found an outlet in the *Nota Bene* Club. Her personal attractions and unquestioned capacity made her a prominent figure from the start, and as her husband had by this time exchanged the retail for the wholesale trade, her social standing had become secure. As is very apt to happen in real life, temptation and opportunity went hand in hand, and her progress

in club life was so rapid that her husband soon raised a protest at her neglect of him, her children and her home. Though pretending to yield to him, she actually kept on, and so successfully that she represented her club at a national convention and finally became its president. This led to an open rupture with her husband, and she left home to live at her club. Fortunately, however, for husband, wife and children, repentance came before it was too late, and the story ends with a reunited household.

The purpose of the book is substantially the same as that of Mrs. John Van Vorst's "The Issues of Life," namely, the defense of the domestic woman against the new woman, but it is free from the personal note that dominates the latter book. The characters are well drawn, and the pictures of club life and club politics are given a convincing air of reality.

It is a book that one would think likely to interest women, though the enthusiastic club woman who reads it will probably protest that very little of it is true.

Another story dealing with a phase of the irrepressible "woman question" is "The Woman Errant," by the author of "The People of the Whirlpool" and "The Garden of a Commuter's Wife," published by the Macmillan Company. Whereas the others were respectively An Experience Book and A Garden Book, this is Some Chapters from the Wonder Book of Barbara, the Commuter's Wife.

It is stated that one of the book's phases "touches on a curious social phenomenon of the present day, which has become strongly marked, yet which is absolutely untouched hitherto in fiction —the challenge of the woman domestic by the woman errant."

The story is substantially that of two girls, Ivory Steele and Susannah—or Sukey, as she preferred to be called—Crandon, whose mental attitudes toward life and their work were diametrically opposed. Ivory is the "woman errant," a term defined by Dr. Russell, who coined it, as referring to the woman—God help her!—"who, either from choice, hazard or necessity, seeks a cause outside the protecting wall of her natural affections!" It contains, he says, no strictures upon woman's work; "it is not the doing, but the way of doing, that marks its distinction to me." And Sukey's way was so different from Ivory's that to the former it brought the joy of development, while to Ivory came disappointment and disaster.

Even if one fails to find himself convinced by the argument of the story, he will, at any rate, wish that he could be, for it is very difficult to avoid sympathizing with the author's charm of style and the thoroughly sincere purpose and sane humor with which the theme is treated. Barbara is a delightful woman, and she has a knack of bringing out the best in everyone.

"The Folly of Others," by Neith Boyce, Fox, Duffield & Co., is a collection of nine short stories, the first and longest, however, being of novelette dimensions, and covering one hundred and seventeen pages out of two hundred and thirty-two.

The most significant thing about the collection is the somewhat grayish atmosphere that hangs above them all, which suggests to the mind of the reader the apparently pessimistic mood in which they were written.

The characters throughout seem to us to be, all of them, people of only one class. They are the prosaic, plodding mediocrities that appeal so strongly to Mr. Howells—people without any special enthusiasm, to whom the events of life come without any surprises or delights, who are never absorbed in any work or any play, whose virtues and even whose vices are of the respectable, well-worn sort.

The title of the book is hardly descriptive, for there is no folly in it; it may be that the folly belongs to those who are not in it.